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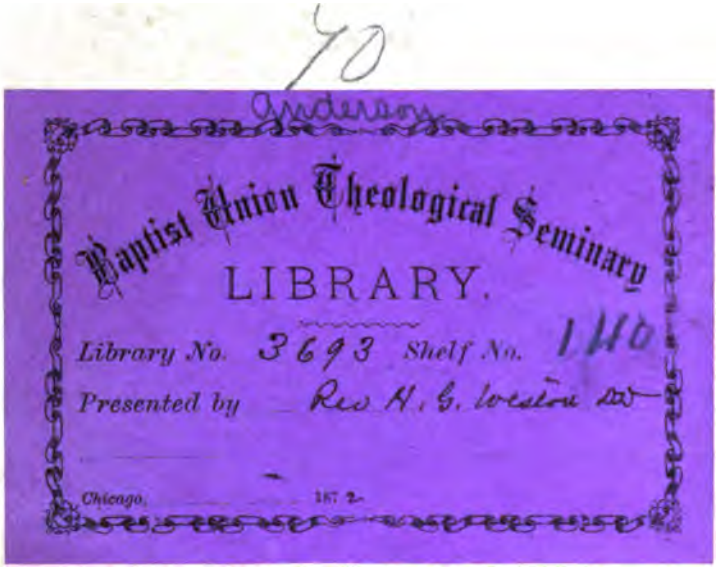
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WHOLE WORKS

OF THE

LATE REVEREND THOMAS BOSTON
OF ETTRICK;

NOW FIRST COLLECTED, AND REPRINTED WITHOUT ABRIDGMENT;

INCLUDING

HIS MEMOIRS, WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

EDITED BY THE

REV. SAMUEL M'MILLAN.

VOL. IX.

ABERDEEN:
GEORGE AND ROBERT KING, ST. NICHOLAS STREET.
M.DCCC.LI.

THE

POSTHUMOUS WORKS

OF THE LATE

REV. THOMAS BOSTON,

CONSISTING OF

SIXTY-SIX SERMONS

ON

IMPORTANT AND INTERESTING SUBJECTS.

WITH A

RECOMMENDATORY PREFACE

BY THE CLERGYMAN WHO PREPARED THE WORK FOR THE PRESS.

By it, he being dead, yet speaketh.—Heb. xi. 4.

ABERDEEN:
GEORGE AND ROBERT KING, ST. NICHOLAS STREET.

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ATTESTATION

IN

FAVOUR OF THIS WORK.

We, whose names are subjoined, having had opportunity of looking over several of these Sermons in manuscript, now proposed for publication, have sufficient reason to be satisfied that they are the genuine remains of the worthy Author whose name they bear. They have been transmitted through the hands of his lineal descendants. From the handwriting, which is such as was common towards the beginning of this century, though now rather antiquated, as well as from the information of those who had access to know, it appears that these Sermons were the original autograph, written at the time mentioned in the dates affixed to them, But to those acquainted with the spirit and manner of Mr. Boston's other writings, the perusal of the Discourses themselves will convince them that they are genuine. They discover the same serious and spiritual strain,—the same perspicuity and simplicity of language,—the same happy fertility and copiousness of scriptural proof and illustration,—the same pertinent application of his subjects to persons and times—the same deep concern about the public interests of religion, and the dangers to which these kingdoms have been exposed through heinous sins and backslidings,—as are conspicuous in his other works. Few have ever attained to his manner and style of writing, so much adapted to popular and general edification. Such of these Discourses as we have perused, seem to have been as carefully and fully written as those formerly published, and on subjects no less interesting. The Sermons in this collection which were composed at the time of the Rebellion that

arose upon the accession of the present family to the throne, will be found deserving particular attention in such a period as the present. It must be a public benefit to have such a savoury entertainment made accessible, through the press, to all who regard the means of their own spiritual improvement, or that of others; and we hope, that, through the divine blessing, the long prevailing rage for frivolous or dangerous reading, may, in some measure, be counteracted by such solid and useful publications as the present.

Thus far we have taken the liberty to express ourselves, in compliance with the request of those concerned in the present publication.

(Signed)

ARCH. BRUCE, Minister of the gospel at Whitburn.
JOHN BROWN, Minister of the gospel at Longridge.
ROB. PATERSON, Minister of the gospel at Biggar.

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE Author of the Discourses now offered to the public is so universally known, and his character as a practical and evangelical writer is so fully established with religious persons of all denominations, that, in regard to the present publication, it may suffice to state, that the Discourses in this and the succeeding volumes are all of them upon important subjects; some of them uncommon and striking. They were composed by the author in the early part of his ministry and in the most vigorous period of his life, as will appear by the dates prefixed to them; on which account, as well as to distinguish them from preceding publications by the same author, though they are the last offered to the public, they appear under the title "Primitiæ;" and as the whole of the remaining manuscripts of the handwriting of the worthy author, as far as is known, are in the possession of the present publishers, for the purpose of accomplishing the present publication, the title "Ultima" is added; intimating, that it is almost certain that they are the last remains that will meet the public eye as a genuine production from the pen of this able Divine.

After the ample recommendation by the author's near relation, and two other respectable clergymen, contained in the preceding pages, it will be necessary only farther to add, that these Discourses have been faithfully transcribed from the originals in the author's handwriting, and correctly printed from them. It is not doubted but that these volumes will be highly acceptable to the religious of all denominations, who, we trust, will unite with the editor and publishers in sincere and fervent prayers, that, through the divine blessing, they may be extensively useful.

EDINBURGH,
January 13, 1800.

SERMONS.

INFALLIBLE ANTIDOTES AGAINST UNBELIEVING FEARS.*

SERMON I.

REV. i. 17, 18,

Fear not: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

TO-DAY is the feast of the Christian passover. A communion table is about to be covered. The great end of persons sitting down at that table is, that they may suck the breasts of consolation, and drink abundantly of that blood which flows from the pierced side of a crucified Saviour. Some feed at this table without fear. Others fear so much that they cannot feed. To such poor trembling souls our text speaks good and comfortable words: "Fear not," &c.

As the Lord shewed to Daniel, a man greatly beloved, the state of his church till his first coming; so to John, another beloved disciple, he discloses the state of his church till his second coming. Both of them were dignified with a vision of Christ, the Son of God; and on each of them it had almost the same effect. In Daniel there remained no strength, Dan. x. Here we see the vision had a similar effect on John. He is represented, ver. 17, as a dead man. He was confounded with the glory of the person whom he saw. His eyes were dazzled with the brightness, his strength failed, he could act no more than if he had been dead. But our Lord revives him. He lays his right hand on him, and strengthens him, that he might be able to stand, hear, and receive his orders. Jesus comforts him. He rebukes his fears: Fear not. There is a fear with which God is well pleased, and a fear of which he does not approve. This last is excessive fear, which greatly mars us in our duty, makes our hearts faint, and our hands hang down, so as that we have neither heart nor hand for our work. This is incident to the people of God;

* Delivered immediately before the dispensation of the Lord's supper, October 6, 1706.

but Christ does not allow them in it, though he is tender of them under it.

We have next, the grounds of consolation, to dispel this fear, viz. (1.) The Godhead of Christ. He is the first and the last. The first principle of all things, from whom they had their beginning, and the last end of all things: an irrefragable testimony this of the divinity of Christ. And it shews us that the comfort of believers depends upon this article. (2.) The union of the Godhead and manhood in one person:—where Christ is held forth as God, the living God; who had life from eternity of himself, and gave life to all the creatures:—As man; in that it is said he died. It is spoken of the same person. It was the living God that died, though not the divine nature. Here we see proposed, for John's comfort, the death of Christ, God-man. He was made man, and died. (3.) His resurrection: I am alive. He overcame death, and arose the third day. (4.) The eternity of that life to which he was raised up: he lives for evermore. To all this is prefixed a Behold! to stir up believers to notice it as the grand fountain of their comfort; and it is followed with an asservation, Amen, or verily, to put them out of doubt of it.

Next, we have his Mediatorial sovereignty: He hath the keys of hell and death. The keys are an ensign of government. The key of the house of David is laid upon his shoulder. He opens and none can shut, he shuts and none can open, Isa. xxii. 22. None go to death or hell but when he sends them; and none are kept out of hell, and taken to glory but by him.

From this subject we may observe the following

Doct. That the death and resurrection of Christ, that eternal life to which he was raised, and his Mediatory sovereignty, are the great grounds of the saints' consolation, and sufficient to dispel all their unbelieving fears.

In discoursing upon this subject, I shall, by divine aid,

I. Speak a little, and but a little, to each of these things, to unfold them, so as that the ground of comfort in them may appear.

II. Point out the consolation of the saint to be found in these.

III. Make some practical improvement.

I. To speak a little to each of the things in the text, to unfold them, so as that the ground of comfort in them may appear.

1. As to his death. On this I offer these few remarks: (1.) His death supposeth—his incarnation, and living as a man in the world, John i. 14, "The word was made flesh and dwelt among us." This has a respect to the Shechinah, or the divine presence: that was a fire, encompassed with a cloud, which was above the ark in the first

temple. Christ's divinity was clouded with his humanity; the form of God, with the form of a servant, Phil. ii. 6—8, "He took upon him our nature." He was a partaker of flesh and blood, Heb. ii. 14. Thus he became a substantial Mediator between God and man, that so he might be a Mediator of reconciliation; how he was conceived, born, and lived in the world, the Evangelists fully relate. (2.) His death was vicarious; he died in the room and stead of sinners, not indeed of all, but of his own sheep. The Socinians allow that he died for our good, though not in our room; but this places the death of the martyrs and of Christ on the same footing. But the scripture is plain, Matth. xx. 28, "He came to give his life a ransom for many." Gal. iii. 13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. He was made sin for us, and died, the just for the unjust." There was a real imputation of the sins of the elect unto Christ, and a real translation of the punishment due to us upon him, Isa. liii. 4—6, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." —This was typified by the sacrifices under the law, on the head of which the offerer laid his hand, typically transferring the sin upon the beast: which was really accomplished in that true sacrifice of Christ, who gave himself for us, "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour," Eph. v. 2. (3.) His sufferings and death were most exquisite: "God spared not his own Son." In the death of Christ there was a complication of deaths; they murdered his reputation, execrating him as a blasphemer against God, and a traitor against the government; placing him between two malefactors, as if he had been the greatest of the three. They murdered his body, and that in a most cruel manner. The wrath of God fell upon his soul, the first drops of which made him cry out, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful." His enemies shewed no pity, but gave him vinegar to drink: he got judgment without mercy from God; even the sun was darkened, that he might not have the light of it, because it is pleasant to the eyes. (4.) His sufferings and death were satisfactory, and that fully. By his one sacrifice, he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified. He was Lord of his own life: he voluntarily laid it down, and that upon a compact betwixt the Father and him. Being God, the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him, the fulness of merit cannot be doubted; for so his

sufferings were of infinite value, to which nothing can be added. He was God, and purchased the church with his own blood, Acts xx. 28. There was a proportion between the sins of the elect, and the sufferings of Christ. Sin is an infinite evil, his sufferings were of infinite value. His deity stamped an infinite value on his sufferings; and in this respect they do more than equal all the possible sufferings of all creatures together; for what would they all be to God dying?

2. As to his resurrection, and the life to which he was restored. The text says, "Behold I am alive." Had he lain still in the grave as dead, all the hopes of believers had died with him; but behold, we have David's comfort: his soul was not left in hell, neither did he see corruption, Psalm xvi. 10. Here consider, (1.) That God raised up Christ; Acts ii. 24, "Him God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." There was the weight of all the elect's sins lying on him as a grave-stone. This was rolled away, and he was raised up by the exceeding greatness of God's power, Eph. i. 19. By this power, also, the Father declared him to be his Son indeed, Rom. i. 4; and that he was fully satisfied for the debt Christ undertook to pay. Therefore, though Christ himself could have rolled away the stone, yet an angel, God's officer, is sent to do it, to open the prison door; thereby declaring, that the Judge had no more to exact of him, that the debt was completely paid. (2.) Where he now lives. It is in heaven, the better country, which we had forfeited by sin, but where we still would fain be. Forty days after his resurrection, he ascended into heaven. As a public person he died, and as such he ascended. There the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec. He is set down on the Father's throne, and is at his right hand. Having offered his bloody sacrifice, he is now gone into the holiest of all, and there will continue till the restitution of all things. (3.) For what he lives. The apostle tells us, that it is to make intercession for us; and he himself says, it is to prepare a place for us in his Father's house, where there are many mansions. He went there to take infeftment of heaven for us, and he lives to keep possession. He lives there as the advocate of the saints, who have continual business at the court of heaven, yet have no skill to manage it; "but," says Paul, "Christ is entered there to appear in the presence of God for us." This is said in allusion to a custom among confederated states and princes, who have their agents, who, upon all occasions, appear in the presence of the prince in behalf of those they represent, and for whom they negotiate, to take up any emergent

differences, or manage whatever business may be put into their hands. We now go on,

3. To the eternity of this life. The man Christ lives for evermore. Amen. Says Paul, "He ever liveth" and that as God-man. The saints cannot outlive their advocate? nay, through eternity they shall behold his glorious face. He will never lay aside our nature. He is now for ever out of the reach of death. He dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over him. Joseph's brethren, when they saw their father was dead, were in a great fear, lest Joseph should avenge the wrong they had done him. No such fear needs the believer have. Jesus lives for ever, to be the eternal bond of the saints' eternal communion with God. For, seeing we can neither come to God by ourselves, nor by ourselves abide in communion with him, it is necessary, that as we come to God by Christ, so by him also must we abide with God for ever. The members must receive influences and glory from their head, to whom they shall remain for ever united. He lives for ever, to be their prophet, for the Lamb is the light of the New Jerusalem, Rev. xxi. 23; and he will be their priest for ever; he continueth for ever, having an unchangeable priesthood, Heb. vii. 24. He will eternally represent his own sacrifice as the foundation of our eternal glory: and as for his kingdom, it is an everlasting kingdom, that shall not be destroyed, Dan. vii. 14. Let us,

4. Attend to his mediatorial sovereignty. He hath the keys of hell and death. He hath all power over the present and future worlds. Hell and death are terrible to the believer; but Christ holds the keys of both. He went down to the grave, opened the door, and brought the keys away with him. None go to hell but whom he sends there, and consequently the keys of heaven are in his hand; which is here also understood. He has "all power in heaven and earth," Matth. xxviii. 18. Of this, Joseph's exaltation in Egypt was a type, Gen. xli. 40. And these keys are the purchase of his blood, Phil. ii. 8, 9, "Because he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name," &c.

Now, these things, the death, resurrection, life, and power of Jesus, may be considered three ways, in order to improve them for consolation to the saints. (1.) As patterns and examples. It is the ordinary way of distressed persons, to conclude there is no sorrow like their sorrow; and if ye can satisfyingly answer that ordinary question of theirs, Was there ever any in my case that got safely out of it? you will do much to allay their grief, and raise

their hopes. Thus we find the apostle improving the sufferings and glory of Christ, Heb. xii. 3, "For, consider him," says he, "that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied, and faint in your minds." Yea, Jesus Christ himself says, Rev. iii. 21, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne." (2.) As pledges, assuring the saints of what they wish for. Thus the apostle improves the resurrection of Christ, to assure believers they shall not lie ever consuming in a grave, but shall be raised up to glory. Christ says he is risen from the dead, the first-fruits of those that slept, 1 Cor. xv. 20; and Jesus tells us, that his life is a pledge of ours: "Because I live, ye shall live also," John xiv. 19. (3.) As containing in them sufficient salves for all their sores. Thus are these the magazine of the saints' consolation, his wounds are the clefts of the rock, wherein the poor creature may safely hide itself. Only bruise the spices, pour out the ointment, consider them in their nature and effects, and assuredly they will send forth a pleasant smell, sufficient to revive and comfort a fainting soul. We are now,

II. To point out the nature of that consolation which saints may derive from these. For this purpose, let us take a view of the fountains of their fears and distrust.

1. There is the super-eminent glory and infinite majesty of the great God. This, when seen and considered by poor worm man, whose habitation is in the dust, is a great source of fear. This made John fall down at his feet as dead. Who can behold the glorious majesty upon this earth, and not be ready to dwindle into nothing? How do some tremble at the view of their fellow-creatures exalted above them in power and dignity! But O what a vast disproportion betwixt God and the greatest monarch! This challenges our fear indeed, but the saints ought not to let it degenerate into slavish fear. God has vailed his throne in the heavens, he spreads his cloud upon it, Job xxvi. 9. This is the common benefit of mankind upon this earth. But the saints have another ground of consolation in the text: and that is the death of Christ, wherein we behold God incarnate, God made flesh, God in our nature. Can ye not look straight forward to divine majesty, then fetch a compass, and look through the vail of the flesh of Christ, and so ye may see God, and not die. "Often and willingly," said Luther, "would I thus look at God."

2. Sin is another fountain of fear; sinfulness considered with the nature of God. Here the sinner first sees guilt in himself, and justice in God, which two together make a very frightful spectacle.

It is the nature of guilt to bind over to punishment, and of justice to inflict it; so that guilt is a great source of fears. But fear not, O Christian; Christ was dead, and is alive for ever more; therefore the guilt that exposes to hell-fire is done away. Thou mayest indeed be guilty, so as to bring upon thee fatherly chastisments for your amendment, but thou art not liable to eternal plagues. You may plead not guilty to the charges of the law as a covenant of works: "For if God be for us, who can be against us?" Rom. viii. 31. Upon the cross there were two crucified, the Son of God, and the law of God. But the Son of God, by his becoming dead, bruised to death the law as a covenant of works, in respect of believers. He took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross, Coloss. ii. 14. Therefore the law, our first husband, being dead, our relation to it is dissolved, and we are legally married to Christ, who was raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. Justice is satisfied. No flaming sword stands any more to guard the tree of life. The storm hath exhausted itself upon Christ; fear not, but come forward. He died in our room. Justice exacted, and he answered. Fear not old accounts, for God spared not his own Son. A thousand may fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand, by the stroke of justice, but it shall not come nigh thee. Do ye doubt the completeness of the satisfaction? Behold Christ in heaven, with the complete discharge in his hand. He is out of prison. He brought the keys with him, and is now on the throne. Everlasting righteousness is brought in, and it is put on thee by him. He is made of God unto you righteousness. Your own is only filthy rags; but that which is imputed unto you will abide the judgment of God, and endure for ever. But,

3. The sinner sees pollution in himself, and holiness in God. When they behold the spotless purity of God, and themselves as an unclean thing, they are ready to say, O will God look on vile me? will these pure eyes cast a favourable glance on such a dunghill-worm? Fear not, Christ was dead, and is alive. He is made of God unto you sanctification. Thou hast some grace amidst a heap of corruptions. Though thou seest not what a lustre this casts within thee, yet God sees it: "The king's daughter is all glorious within," Psalm xlv. 13. But look to your outer garments, which are of wrought gold, they will hide all your deformities. Though you are, in respect of inherent grace, but fair as the moon, yet your imputed righteousness is clear as the sun. To this some may object, "I am guilty of gross sins, and that even since the Lord began to deal with me." Fear not, Christ died; and if so, God died for your sins. If he was God who died, when he was pouring out his blood, he

knew all the sins you would be guilty of, even after your conversion. He did not shed his blood in vain, and therefore in his death he had even these in his view; and will not the blood of God be able to expiate the grossest sins? It cleanseth from all sin. Remember also he is alive evermore to intercede for you: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father," 1 John ii. 1. If his blood was sufficient for expiation, his intercession cannot but be prevalent. —"But I may say, I sin evermore, and that breaks my soul." Fear not, Christ lives evermore; and, if ye believe the apostle, it is to make intercession for you. If Christ lives evermore, ye shall not sin evermore: for he will not thus live alone without you; where he is, there you shall be also, John xvii. 24. "But the sin of my nature lies nearest my heart: I am just a lump of hell, and a mass of sin. Acts of sin are transient, but this is permanent, and I cannot be freed of it." Fear not: Christ died, and therefore, though it may make your way to heaven difficult, yet ye shall never be condemned for it. Nay, good news, O believer! with the death of Christ sin got a fatal wound. Your old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, Rom. vi. 6. You wonder it is so troublesome; but why do ye do so? The old man is mortally wounded; and can you think he will groan out his life in silence, and not move a tongue against Christ? But as surely as Christ came not down from the cross till he breathed out his last, so surely shall the body of death in you be destroyed.

3. Desertions are a cause of fears. The deserted soul is an affrighted soul. Say some, "Christ is withdrawn from me: my sun has gone down: nothing now but darkness and confusion: I can see no evidences of the Lord's love to me: I may say as Job, chap. xxiii. 8, 9, "I go forward and backward, but I cannot perceive him." But fear not, Christian; it has been, and it will be, better with you. Good news to you in your low state, Christ died, and in his death he was forsaken of God; and yet he now enjoys the bosom of the Father, and the light of his countenance. Who would not be content to follow Christ, even through the valley of the shadow of death? Ye pray, and it seems ye are not heard; so it was with Christ: "O my God," said he, "thou hearest not," Psalm xxii. 2. But though your husband be far off, though you cannot see him, yet he is not dead, he is alive; and if alive, he will come again, for he hateth putting away. Though ye seem to be out of sight, yet ye are not out of mind; he liveth evermore. Zion's account of Christ under a fit of desertion, is not canonical, it is not orthodox, Isa. xlix. 14—16, "But Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she

should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands, thy walls are continually before me."

To this the objection may be proposed, "But how can I endure to want the joys I have sometimes had, and these blessed consolations?" Answer, Trust in God, and have respect to the recompense of the reward of grace. Will you disquiet yourselves because there is not a second summer in one year? Bless God that helps you to the fight in any measure; wait patiently for his comforts, and be constantly at your work. Again, say others, "Were there no more in my case, I might keep heart; but I am under dreadful apprehensions of wrath, and there are positive outgoings of God's anger against my soul, as Job vi. 4, "The arrows of the Almighty are within me." Here, I confess, it is hard to stand, and not to fall down at his feet as dead. Yet we must say, Fear not; for Christ was dead, and the wrath of God was poured out into his soul, which melted his heart like wax in the midst of his bowels: Yet he swam through this ocean. Now, that he is alive, is a pledge that ye shall not drown: For, says he, "because I live ye shall live also."

It was one of the ends of Christ's death, to deliver you and the like of you, Heb. ii. 15, "And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. You are mistaken, if you think the arrows are dipped in deadly poison; for Christ was dead, and is alive, and the poison of these arrows entered into his soul in full measure, and he drank it up; Gal. iii. 13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." They will wound very sore, though there be no poison, no curse in them. Your cloud has a white side, if ye could discern it; only believe, and ye shall be established. This is the heat of the battle with you. Keep hold of the death of Christ as your shield that will defend you. Look not on God, but through the veil of the flesh of Jesus. Dry stubble may be safe, if there be a strong crystal wall between it and the fire. Does God appear as a consuming fire? Christ is the crystal wall: set him betwixt you and an angry God. The light of that fire will shine through him to refresh you, but it will not burn through him. It has been often tried; he is still alive, and ye shall live also.

4. Temptations are a source of fears. Sometimes Satan gets leave to dog saints at their heels. With what horrid temptations poor souls may be harassed, some know by sad experience: fiery darts that they tremble to think of, and that they dare not name! This fills them with fear: but to such I say, Fear not. Christ died,

and is alive evermore. He that thus lives evermore gave a deadly wound to the tempter. When Jesus was in the world, Satan set on him with the most severe temptations; but Jesus overcame him, and at his death triumphed over him. He spoiled principalities and powers, Col. ii. 15, "And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it." You see, then, that the enemy with whom you fight is already vanquished, and the victory of Jesus over him is a sure pledge of yours. Yea, as in the first Adam we were all tempted and fell, so in the second Adam we were tempted and stood; and so have overcome already in our Head. We have no more to do but cry to our Lord, who, from his own temptations, well knows how to succour his tempted people. We must give the alarm, and handle our weapons. Though the fight may last a while, yet it will come to an end, and we shall be more than conquerors. Jesus is in heaven, waiting till his enemies be made his footstool; and he will bruise Satan under our feet shortly.

5. Death is the cause of much fear. O how hard is it to look on it with a stayed countenance! Death is terrible, in that it is a dissolution of nature, parts soul and body; and therefore we are so apt to shudder at the thoughts of it. But fear not; for Christ died. His precious soul and body were parted; so he orders us to travel no path but such as he hath trode before us. By his death he has destroyed death; he has unstinged it to the believer. Then, fear it not, it can do you no harm, "But death is terrible, in that it takes us out of this world from all our enjoyments, from our dearest relations and friends, and sends us into another world, where we know not a foot of ground, where we never saw a face. Were a child born with that judgment that men have, the first sight of this world might be terrible to him; so must the unseen world be to us. But fear not: he that was dead is alive; and when ye are carried off, you shall be with him who is infinitely better than all earthly relations. Here is your comfort. Jesus hath the keys of hell and death. He is Lord supreme of that other world to which you are travelling. He sends you such word as Joseph sent his father, Gen. xlv. 9, saying, "God hath made me lord of all Egypt; come down unto me, tarry not." O to believe it firmly!

6, And *Lastly*, Hell is a fountain of fears. Sometimes the godly are above, sometimes under the fears of hell. It is terrible, the thought of being excluded for ever the presence of God! "Who can abide with everlasting burnings?" When we look down to the pit, it seems hard to escape it; when we look up to heaven, our souls faint, lest we never get there. But fear not: for Christ died; and if so,

he suffered the torments thou shouldst have suffered in hell, as to the essentials of them. He was under the punishment of loss; God forsook him, Psalm xxii. 1. He endured the punishment of sense, even to drops of blood, and the wrath of God poured into his soul. Then God will not require two payments for one debt. Christ lives, he rose, and entered heaven as a public person; and therefore, believer, thou shalt as surely go to heaven as if thou wert there already, yea, the apostle says we are there already. Eph. ii. 6, "We are raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," as our Head. Jesus lives for evermore; and therefore thou shalt be for ever with the Lord. He has the keys of hell and death. Suppose your father or best friend on earth had these keys, would you be afraid? But we may have more confidence in Jesus than in ten thousand fathers, or even the mothers that bare us. They may forsake us, and a mother may be found that will not have compassion on the son of her womb; but, O believer, Jesus hath said, "I will not forget thee," Isa. xlix. 15, 16, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet I will not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hand, thy walls are continually before me." Though Satan be the jailor of hell, yet he keeps not the keys; they hang, believer, at the girdle of your best friend.

III. We shall conclude with some improvement.

1. From this subject we may infer the comfortless state of them that are out of Christ. Are the truths in the text grounds of consolation to the saints? How, then, can they bear up who have no interest in Christ? Nay, we might turn the black side of this white cloud upon unbelievers, and tell them, that if Jesus died how can they escape? If he be alive, he will avenge their contempt of him and their neglect of his salvation. If he lives for evermore, then they will have an eternal enemy. If he has the keys of hell, then they cannot escape that prison; or be rescued out of it.

2. That it is the duty of Christians to improve these things for their actual comfort. Christian, sit down at his table, and suck the breasts of consolation. Build your comforts on these truths. Alas! our comforts are often short lived, because we do not found them sure enough. I will give you but a few notes concerning this. (1.) The grieving of the Spirit cuts the throats of our comforts. (2.) Good men sometimes build their comforts on outward blessings; hence, when these are gone, their comfort is gone. (3.) On grace within them, not on grace without them; the comfort of some streams from their obedience principally, therefore it is soon dried up; whereas

the death and life of Christ are liable to no change, as is our obedience. (4.) Upon the coming in of words to their minds. Hence, when a promise comes in, they are comforted; when a threatening, all is gone. I do believe that the Spirit comforts his people by the word, and that he makes words come in with an impression on the soul; John xiv. 26, "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said." But then these words lead the soul direct to Christ, and to build our comfort on him; but it is not of God to build it on the bare impression of a comfortable word. The coming in of a word should guide us to Christ; and though the impression, the guide go, yet we may keep our hold of him.—Here we are presented with an objection, "But I fear I have nothing to do with these consolations." ANSW. Are you this day willing to take Christ? Then give your consent, and he is yours, and all is yours: "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely," Rev. xxii. 17. OBJECT. "But I fear I am not sincere, in that I am actuated from fear of hell, and hope of reward." ANSW. If ye fear not God's wrath, so as to endeavour to escape it, ye are despisers of God; if ye desire not salvation, so as to labour for it, ye are monstrous murderers of your own souls. Let your self-love only be regular, and it is commendable; and then it is regular when your desires of happiness are carried towards it through Christ and the way of holiness; so that your soul longs for Christ as well as salvation, and ye desire to be holy as well as happy. It is regular, when it is subordinate to the will of God; and that is, when the man justifies God, though he should cast him off, and yet, come what will, is resolved to cleave to the Lord and his way.

A word to other two sources of the saint's fears.

1. Weakness and spiritual inability for the duties of religion. The soul taking a view of the great work it has to do, what strong lusts are to be mortified, temptations resisted, duties performed; and then, considering how weak and unable it is for any of these things, it is even ready to sink. But fear not: Christ died, &c. Heb. xii. 12, "Wherefore, lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees." Christ died, and therefore strength for duty is purchased. In the first Adam, the influences of the Spirit were forfeited; in the second Adam, they are bought back again. The well-ordered covenant is sealed and confirmed. There is a fulness in the covenant for all your wants. There are promises in it that will answer all your needs. Now, the covenant is confirmed, for the testator is dead. Christ liveth; he arose from death, and lives evermore; therefore, he that has the believer's stock of strength is alive. Adam got our first stock, but he became insolvent; Christ

got the next, he liveth in the court of heaven as a public person and treasury of strength; "Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace," John i. 16.

The believer's Surety to the Father stands good; and what need they fear as long as their Cautioner holds foot? Christ is the believer's cautioner for sanctification and perseverance, John x. 28, and chap. xvii. 12, "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled." Therefore he is called "the surety of a better testament," Heb. vii. 22. Now, he will not see his people in want of what is necessary for their through-bearing. He lives for that end, to dispense the benefits of the covenant. He holds the keys, therefore they shall not want. The Spirit is given by virtue of his ascension, John xvi. 7, "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send him unto you." For what purpose was Joseph sent to Egypt, and exalted there, but to provide for his father's family, being therein a notable type of Christ? Well, then, fear not; wiles help weak folk. Though ye want strength, yet you have wisdom afforded you, even in betaking yourselves to Christ. I may allude to that, Prov. xxx. 24—29, "There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise. The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer; the conies are but a feeble flock, yet make they their houses in the rocks; the locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands; the spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in king's palaces." Ye have the wisdom of the ants, to provide your meat in summer; of the conies, to build in the Rock Christ; of the locusts, not to set out alone; and of the spiders, to be in the palace of the great King, holding by the promises. 2 Cor. xii. 9, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

2. The danger of an evil time is another source of fear. Psalm xlix. 5, "Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about? Two things there look ghastly upon them. (1.) The hazard of sinning. An evil time is a time of many snares. The soul is afraid that he will never stand out, but one day will fall. Fear not:—Christ died, and it was an evil time, a time of many snares, yet he came safe off. This he did as a public person, and so it is a pledge that ye shall also be carried through; see Heb. iv. 14.—16. Christ lives evermore, therefore ye may say, as David, Psalm xviii. 46, 48, "The Lord liveth, and blessed

be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted. He delivereth me from mine enemies," &c. He lives to intercede, which was Peter's security: "I have," says he, "prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." He is busy for his people, when they have most need. (2.) There is hazard of suffering, and that is frightful to flesh and blood. Fear not:—Christ died, and therefore the bitter dregs of the cup are drunken off. He was forsaken in his sufferings, that you might be supported in your sufferings.—Your sufferings will but conform you to Christ your head. Christ liveth, and therefore ye shall be supported in suffering, that the world may know that he who was dead is alive. Remarkable is that word, 2 Cor. iv. 10, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also might be made manifest in our body." A suffering time is a special season in which Christ uses to appear. We read thrice of Christ's hour, John xiii. 1, "Now, before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come, that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." Chap. xvii. 1, "These words spake Jesus,—Father, the hour is come," &c. That was an hour of darkness. John ii. 4, "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come." That was an hour wherein the wine was done, and the pots were filled with water; you know what followed.

Here it may be objected, "But what if ordinances be taken away?" Answ. If they be, the God of ordinances endures for ever. Christ liveth, "and he shall be for a sanctuary," Isa. viii. 14. And says God, by Ezekiel, concerning his scattered people, "Yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come," chap. xi. 16. When there was no ordinary food to be got in the wilderness, it was sent down from heaven. Though our kirk doors should be shut, heaven's door shall be open as long as Christ liveth. Object. "But I think I am very unfruitful under ordinances." Answ. It is the greater shame! But if this be thy trouble, know that Christ liveth; and therefore, if there be sap in the root, there is always hope of the branches. There is enough there, draw it out. But as Christ first died, then arose, so the believer grows downward as well as upward. If ye have a heart-memory, though ye want a head-memory, it is well.—Object. "But what shall those do, when they are seized with fear and discouragement, and cannot tell wherefore?" Answ. The Lord may sometimes exercise his people so, to shew them their own weakness and nothingness. But possibly it may be the majesty of God that so affects thee, and the reason why it is not discerned to be so, may be an intimation of the Lord's love just

going before it. See Dan. x. 10—12, "And behold, a hand touched me, which set me upon my knees, and upon the palms of my hands. And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent: and when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling." But however it be, the only cure is believing, Psalm xxvii. 13, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." The sooner you believe, the better; for in this case a man is like one that is going to ride a great water that is increasing; the longer he delays, the water grows still the greater.

Now, the way to make use of these things, so as to draw comfort from them, is to believe. There is, in the first place, a firm assent to the truths revealed, 1 John v. 5, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" then, an act of faith, realizing these things, Heb. xi. 1, "Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." To which may be added, an act of assurance, Gal. ii. 20, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." If ye cannot reach to all this extent, yet you may reach an act of adherence. A trembling hand may draw the water of consolation out of the wells of salvation. Amen.

SIN THAT WHICH SEPARATES GOD AND MEN.*

SERMON II.

ISAIAH lix. 2,

But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

WHEN we look abroad through the world, many sad sights may be seen; but amongst the most lamentable is man, who was by the Lord planted a noble vine, wholly a right seed, but now turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine. Some are lying mouldering in the grave of a graceless state, noisome to God and to good men; some are in a withered state, their former beauty gone, and death

* Delivered Nov. 3, 1706.

has settled down on their faces, because God, the life and soul of their souls, is gone. If they inquire, with Rebekah, Why am I thus? the answer is in the text: "Your iniquities," &c.

In these words, we have, 1*st*, A dreadful evil that this people was under, separation from God. 2*dly*, The party at whose door the blame lies, they who have made the breach. 3*dly*, The procuring cause of this evil, "your iniquities."

As to the 1*st*, Separation is either good or bad, according to the quality of the term from which men are separated. But the separation here is held forth as an evil, and that the greatest evil; for it is a separation from God, an evil which is so heavy, that, when felt, it is enough to make a Cain groan, and say, "It is greater than I can bear," Gen. iv. 13. Sin makes many separations. It separates the nearest relations, it separates the soul from the body. But all these are inconsiderable in respect of this, the separation of the soul from God. It is an evil still greater, for it is a separation from a covenanted God. YOUR GOD. Free love had separated Israel from all other people on the earth, and made them the Lord's by a peculiar relation; but sin separates betwixt them and that God to whom they were thus joined. That there should be a separation betwixt God and the Gentile world, who had professedly joined themselves to other gods, is not to be wondered at; but how dreadful is this, to be separated from our God! No fall is like a fall to hell from off heaven's threshold. The higher persons are raised up, the lower do they sink when they fall.

2. Who are to blame? Why, men are ready to say, God is an austere master, and forgetful of the children of men; and from our first father we have it as hereditary, rather to lay the blame on God, than to take it to ourselves. Therefore, he clears himself of it, ver. 1, shewing he wants neither power nor will to help them, on due application; and accordingly, he lays the blame where it should be, even on themselves. They made the breach; they may thank themselves for what they lie under, for they have drawn it on with their own hands.

3. How have they done it? Has God, who is exalted above the heavens, withdrawn from them, because they are on the earth as nothing before him? Cannot infinite majesty lodge with the soul in a cottage of clay? Has he separated from them, because they are mean, hated and despised by their neighbours round about them? No, no; none of these are the causes. Their iniquities are the only cause of all. Nothing but sin could part them. Sin is the only make-bate betwixt God and you. This subject affords us this

DOCTRINE, viz. However light people think of sin, yet it is that which is of so dreadful efficacy, as to make a separation betwixt God and the sinner. Sin separates between God and a soul.

In discoursing which, I shall shew,

I. What is that separation which sin makes betwixt God and souls.

II. I shall evince the greatness of the evil of separation from God, which many go so lightly under.

III. Inquire how sin makes this separation betwixt God and the soul.

IV. Make some practical improvement.—I am to shew,

I. What is that separation which sin makes betwixt God and a soul. It is not a local separation; for "he is not far from every one of us, for in him we live, move, and have our being;" Acts xvii. 27, 28. The wicked would fain be at a local separation, and therefore, in their vain imaginations, they shut up God in heaven, that he may not see what is done on earth. But the immensity and omnipresence of God make this simply impossible; for as he is God, he is intimately present with us, even in the very centre of our souls; so that, unless our sins could undeify him, (if the expression may be used), they can make no local separation betwixt him and us. Hence it is remarkable, that even in hell the wicked shall be punished from the presence of the Lord, 2 Thess. i. 9. He will not send his strokes upon them from heaven, or from afar, though he could preserve the force of them by the way, but he will erect his throne of justice among them: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there: If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me," Psalm cxxxix. 7—10. But it is a relative separation, inferring a distance of opposition betwixt God and the soul, and affecting the man's state, or case, or both. It makes such a separation as is made by whisperers betwixt friends: "A whisperer," saith Solomon, "separateth chief friends." This being the case, the Lord's countenance is not towards the sinner as it was before the breach was made. And as by sin there is an alienating of the sinner's affection from God, so in God there is something equivalent to the alienation of affections from the sinner, for affections are not properly ascribed to God. Thus, concerning every one that separateth himself from the Lord, and setteth up his idols in his heart, God saith, Ezek. xiv. 8, "I will set my face

against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people, and ye shall know that I am the Lord."

As to this separation, we observe,

1. That in it there is something negative; and that is, the Lord denies them the influences of his grace, countenance, and fellowship; they are deprived of benefits, their sins withhold good things from them. The scripture expresseth it by the Lord's hiding his face from sinners, as it is said in the text, by shewing them the back, and not the face, Jer. xviii. 17; by forgetting them, Hos. iv. 6. Thus the sun of many is gone down, they "stumble at noon, as in the night, and are in desolate places as dead men," Isa. lix. 10. They go up and down in the world, as walking statues, carrying dead souls in their bodies as living coffins; for God is gone, and his glory is departed from them.

2. There is something positive in it, sin kindles a fire against the soul. (1.) There is a standing controversy God has against sinners; Amos iii. 3, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" God is displeased with the creature, his Spirit is grieved at him. Anger rests in the bosom of God against the sinner, as long as he keeps the sinful morsel under his tongue, which, though pleasant to the poor soul in the meantime, is most displeasing to a holy God. (2.) There is a pursuing of this controversy against the sinner; some positive outgoings of God's anger against the soul, in angry looks, which, if perceived, are enough to put the stoutest sinner out of countenance. In this way did the Lord look unto the host of the Egyptians, through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled them, Exod. xiv. 24. Angry words, even sad threats, ministered by the word and the man's conscience; also sad strokes upon the soul, sometimes upon the body, sometimes on both at once, are measured out.

But to this it may be objected, says one, "Happy am I then, for I see no such thing." Answ. Were there no more upon most of us than we feel, we would have a very light burden either of sin or wrath upon us. But take heed ye be not like Ephraim, Hos. vii. 9, "Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea, grey hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not." Or like the Ephesians, chap. iv. 19, "Who being past feeling, gave themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." Are you going on in your sins? then be sure God is going on against you, pursuing his quarrel; and even in small things, if it were but the miscarrying of a basket of bread, the curse of God is in it to a wicked man, which makes it in itself very heavy. There are two kinds of strokes upon the soul: (1.) Deadening

strokes; these are secret strokes which God gives, and they are not easily perceived. By them the conscience is deadened, the soul stupified, and thus the man is fattened for the day of slaughter. People think never to get their fill of ease, and sometimes the Lord gives them enough of it: Hos. iv. 17, "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone," (Heb. give him rest). (2.) Quickening strokes: Hos. v. 14, "For I will be to Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah; I, even I, will tear and go away, and no one shall rescue him." By such strokes the conscience is made like Mount Sinai, when there was nothing but thunder, and lightning, and the sound of the trumpet waxing louder and louder. Many men's consciences are like iron taken out of the fire, and having lain a little, no fire appears there; but when some drops of water fall on it, it makes a hissing noise.

But the objector still says, "On the contrary, I find Providence very favourable to me." Answ. Is it in spiritual good things? findest thou that because he lives, thou livest also? Is Providence kind to thee in influences of grace, communion with God? surely, then, Christ has taken away the separation wall. But is it in external things? then know that these are no discriminating marks of nearness to God; see Job xxi. 7, God is kind to you as ye are to him; Lev. xxvi. 27, "And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me, then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury." He tells them they walked with him by accident, by the bye, when they chanced to light on him; and he says he will walk with them so too. What good the wicked does, is for another end than the glory of God; and what good he does to them, is oftentimes in wrath.

Now this separation is twofold; 1. Total, agreeing to the wicked only, to whom, in respect of their state, God is an enemy. This is that state of separation from God in which we are born, produced by Adam's sin, Rom. v. 12, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." This, to some, even to the elect, is only temporary, the separation wall being pulled down, and they brought near by the blood of Christ, applied by faith at their conversion, Eph. ii. 13. To others it is eternal, who, living and dying in a state of distance from God, are separated from God, soul and body in hell for evermore; according to that, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." This eternal separation is not meant in the text, but it is a certain consequent of the other, if it is continued in, for none are brought near to God in glory, who are not, by grace, first brought near to him here.

2. There is a partial separation, which agrees to the godly, who have the root of the matter in them. Sometimes the Lord is provoked to withdraw from his own people: "I opened," says the spouse, Song v. 6, "to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself; my soul failed when he spake; I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him but he gave me no answer." Sometimes Christ's garden is left, so that there is no blowing of the Spirit there, Song iv. 16. Hence the saints are so often praying to God to return to them. Often may we see the King's children, having their white robes sullied with tears, and rolled in the dust, because of a departed God. What a mournful voice has the sweet finger of Israel often, under desertions and hidings of God's face! Heman looks upon himself as a burgess of the land of darkness, not only forsaken but forgotten, Psalm viii. 8. This makes them, with Job, cry out, "O! that it were with me as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shone on my head!"

II. I shall evince the greatness of the evil of separation from God, which many go so light under. Alas! many reign like kings with God; they be like king Saul, when God departed from him; but how sad a thing this is, will appear, if we consider,

1. What God is. Every thing in God speaks terror to those that are separated from him. I shall only take notice of these following: (1.) God is the chief good; and therefore to be separated from God is the chief evil. Our native country we look on as good; and therefore to be banished from it is a heavy trial. Relations are good, life and liberty are good; and, therefore, to be deprived of them is very afflicting. But God is the chief good; all these petty good things disappear, and dwindle into nothing, when compared with God. How dreadful, then, must it be to be separated from him! If the enjoyment of him is the highest pinnacle of happiness, separation from him is the lowest step of misery. It is often observed, as an aggravation of the sufferings of the primitive Christians, that they suffered not only from the emperors who were accounted monsters of men, but also from those who were admired by the people for their virtues. Surely, then, to be cast off by goodness itself in infinite perfection, must be very distressing. (2.) God is all-sufficient in himself, and to the creatures. The enjoyment of him makes truly happy; and therefore to be separated from him is a dreadful evil. While David thinks on God as his portion, his heart leaps for joy: "The lines," says he, "are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage," Psalm xvi. 6—9. While Cain sees himself driven from his presence, his punishment appears intolerable. The frowns of those we depend upon, and can-

not live without, are very grievous. To forsake the "fountain of living waters," Jer. ii. 13, is held forth as a great evil of sin; and to be partially separated from it, must also be a great punishment. (3.) The omnipotence of God. Job takes notice that "the arrows shot against him were arrows of the Almighty," Job vi. 4. Let all the men on earth, and devils in hell, let the angels come down and help to draw the bow, still it is but finite power against the man; but how terrible would it be, to be a mark to these arrows! how much more, when the Omnipotent God pursues the quarrel! (4.) The absoluteness of God. Let men and devils work against the sinner, let them do their utmost, there is one that can stay their hands, and say to each of them, "What doest thou?" but God is a King against whom there is no rising up. There is none who can stay his hand, or say unto him, "What doest thou?" Dan. iv. 35. Can the pots hinder the potter to dash them all in pieces? Or can worm man shake off the yoke of God's absolute dominion, and live in a separate state from him? (5.) God is eternal. If a great man be our enemy, we know always death will end the quarrel; if we have such an one to be our friend, yet death will tie up his hands, that he can give us no more favours: but God endures for ever. Had a man not only the earth, but the heavens for his portion, yet "the earth shall be burnt up, and the heavens wax old as a garment;" thieves may steal away the covetous man's treasures out of his barns and coffers; moths may consume what remains, the devil in wicked men may take away all he has in the world; only God is an everlasting friend and portion. It must, then, be very sad to be separated from such an one.

2. All created things are empty and unsatisfactory. They are a lie, alluring afar off; but when men come near, they answer not their expectations. The world, that bulky vanity, that great round nothing, can no more fill the heart, than a triangle a circle. All created things stand as two lame legs under vanity and insufficiency. He was a fool, indeed, that laid up for his soul in his barns, as if his swine and his soul could have fed at one trough. Cain had the broad world to find himself support, but all was sapless: his punishment from God's face was greater than he could bear. Where God is wanting, there is a void which a thousand worlds cannot fill up; and therefore, if you know the truth, ye would say to your sins, to your lusts, "Ye have taken away my God, and what have I more?"

3. To be separated from God is the saddest plague out of hell. When God departs, he leaves a burden on the soul behind him, which, when felt, will make the soul to roar: "Yea, woe also to

them when I depart from them," Hos. ix. 12. Who can tell the ills the sinner is exposed unto, when once sin separates between God and him. Saul felt a total separation; and what a desperate project did it set him upon! Job felt a partial separation, which was so heavy, that his soul choosed strangling and death, rather than life," Job vii. 15.

4. Nay, it is a very hell to be separated from God. Therefore David complains, "that the sorrows of death compassed him, and that the pains of hell got hold upon him," Psalm cxvi. 3. Even coals of hell are cast upon the godly in this world, when their sins have made this separation; only they are softened with love, whereas those cast upon the wicked are dipped in the poison of the curse. Men by their sins now greedily sue out a separation from God. What will hell be, but a giving them their will? For the torments of hell are summed up in that, "Depart from me, I know you not."

5. I shall only add, that those that continue in a state of separation from God, have no quarter to which they can turn for comfort in an evil day. We know not what sad trials we may live to see. When men that are seeking great things for themselves now, may think they are come well to, if they get Baruch's part, their life for a prey; but for a man to be in Samson's case, the Philistines upon him, and God departed from him, must be heavy indeed. We must all die: this we know. Let a man squeeze his cisterns, then, with which he now solaces himself in his separation from God, what will they do for him? they will not be able to stay his fleeting and fainting soul. We must rise again. Will the gods ye now serve, help you then? Will the sea, the rocks, or mountains, fall on him, will the earth cover him, who, to enjoy it, incurred a separation from God? No, no! O ungrateful earth, that the man consumed time, heart, and strength upon, while his days lasted, that will not take part with him, now when he is not able to do for himself. We must stand before his tribunal, and come near before his throne for judgment, whose presence we now forfeit for the satisfying of our lusts. What will comfort us then, when we see we have passed this partial state of separation from God, as a short preface to an eternal separation from him.

III. I am now to inquire, how sin makes this separation betwixt God and a soul?

1. There is the guilt of sin, whereby the sinner is bound over to misery for his sin. God, from vindicative justice, acts against the wicked; and this justice of his naturally requires punishment to be inflicted on the sinner, according to the law. Hence, when Adam sinned, a flaming sword was set to keep him off from the tree of life.

The enjoyment of God is the greatest good; now, justice will not permit this, while guilt remains untaken away: and therefore, separation from God necessarily follows. As to the godly, by their guilt they are bound over to fatherly anger and chastisements, whereof that partial separation from God is the chief part.

2. There is the stain and defilement of sin. Now, God is of purer eyes than to behold evil. An unholy sinner cannot have communion with a holy God; and in regard that some are altogether polluted, they are therefore altogether separated from God. Others are only in part polluted, by reason of some one or more sins regarded in their hearts; therefore are under that partial separation, Psalm lxvi. 18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." The leper, for his uncleanness, was put without the camp; so is the sinner. They only are admitted to stand in the holy place, who have clean hands and a pure heart, Psalm xxiv. 4. Hence says James, chap. iv. 8, "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you: cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded."—It remains,

IV. That I make some practical improvement from this subject. We have,

1. An use of information. We may hence see, (1.) That it is sin which makes a land weak, mean, and contemptible, and is the cause of all national calamity; for sin separates between them and their God. Then their strength is departed from them; and therefore, though the people should unite with one another, there is little good to be expected so long as such abominations abound in the land, setting God against us. O that we might see the day, when, uniting with heaven, we might be zealously affected in reformation; and the heaven-daring abominations that abound, in principle and practice, be zealously suppressed. But every one minds their own things, few the things that are Christ's. (2.) Why so few have communion with God in ordinances, public, private, and secret. Are there not many at public ordinances dead and lifeless, sitting like idols that have eyes and see not, hands but handle not? Why, sin has separated between God and them. Hence they go as they came; no intercourse with God. The Lord goes by them, and comes by them, speaks to the hearts of others, but not to them. They cannot walk together; for they are not agreed. (3.) Why so many slight religious duties? Some will not bow a knee to God; they will not commune with their hearts, nor converse with God. Sin hath separated them; and what pleasure can they take to converse with an enemy, or one that has turned his back to them? Hence some are not afraid of any company so much as themselves; and therefore, if

their consciences begin to speak, they labour some way or other to divert it. (4.) Whence is the root or cause of all the misery professors are lying under at this day? Security, barrenness, withering, desertion, and the like. What wonder that it be so? They may thank themselves for the whole. It is their dallying with some bosom idol, their grieving the Spirit, and slighting his motions and convictions, their worldliness and unwatchfulness: these are the root, the cause of all their misery.

2. A use of exhortation. (1.) To those who enjoy nearness to God. O beware of sin! If ye give way to it, it will soon turn your wine into water, and overcloud your enjoyments. Live at a distance from it; for it is the very thing from which you are in such great hazard. (2.) To those who are by their sins separated from God. Break off your course of sin, continue not in it. Is not the separation wall high enough, and thick enough already? what needs more be added? What shall you do to get the separation taken away?—Lay hold on the Lord Jesus by faith, Isa. xxvii. 5, "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me." Jesus is the ladder that knits heaven and earth together. It is by him that God reconciles the world to himself. His blood takes away both guilt and pollution. It purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Though God hears not sinners, yet in Christ he is well pleased; and through him they may find access to, and acceptance with him. He is our peace: he is the Mediator between God and man. Repent, and turn from your sins. There is no concord between Christ and Belial. To enjoy both God and your lusts is impossible; ye shall as soon bring together the two poles. However some make a mock of sin now, yet it has separated, and will separate them from God eternally, if they separate not from it.

THE FOLLY OF RESISTING, THE WISDOM OF COMPLYING WITH THE GOSPEL CALL.*

SERMON III.

MATTH. xxi. 29,

He answered and said, I will not; but afterwards he repented, and went.

THE scope of this parable is to shew, that many who have been the vilest of sinners repent and go to heaven, when others, who, though they have a profession of religion, never go farther than a mere profession, and so fall short; partly, also, to shew that many who had been publicans and harlots are now in a better case than the chief priests and scribes. To convince of this, Christ spoke the parable before us.—For understanding of which, I would notice, that the man in the parable represents God; the two sons, two different sorts of people among the Jews. Both had the gospel call by John the Baptist. The first of the sons points out the publicans and harlots, who, though they were formerly most vile and hopeless creatures, yet, on their hearing of John, repented, and became disciples indeed. The second represents the priests and pharisees, who, notwithstanding of their high pretences to religion, yet were indeed strangers to it, their practices did not correspond with their profession.

In the text, which concerns the first son, pointing out the penitent publicans and harlots, we have two things.

1. The sinner's first answer to the gospel call; and it is a short one; "I will not." Like Israel, Psalm lxxxi. 11, "But my people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me." The sinner so loves his sinful ease, that he cannot think of the work in God's vineyard. Observe in this answer, (1.) The rudeness of it. The son remembered not that he was speaking to a father, so has not so much as a fair word to bestow on him. O the rude treatment Christ meets with at sinners' hands! They remember not his authority over them, nor do they regard it; but they will be their own; who is Lord over them? (2.) The plainness of it. He tells the matter plainly; says not, he cannot, but he will not. It is want of will to the work of religion that is the great stop. Sinners' hearts cannot relish the work of religion: the bent of

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their hearts lies another way. (3.) The peremptoriness of it; he is at a point. The hearing of the word raises his heart against it. Let sinners hear of the work of religion, and that is enough, they desire no more of it. It is a plain case to them, they must not, they will not engage in such a task.

2. The second answer, in which the former bad answer is happily retracted; "But afterwards he repented, and went." He complies with the call he had before refused. The spring of this was, his heart was touched; he took second thoughts of the business, and changed his mind. He fell under after grief, anxiety, and solicitude, as the word signifies. Conscience, that was silent before, now begins to speak, and his blood begins to cool; he calmly considers what he had answered, and he calls himself beast and fool, that should have adventured so to treat his Father; and hence he takes up the work of religion, which he had before rejected. From this subject there arises this

Doct. That refusing the work of religion is not be stood to, but retracted, and the sinner will see cause for it, if ever he comes to himself. They who have refused to comply with the gospel call, to engage in the work of the Lord, should take their word again, and heartily comply with it; and if ever they be wise, they will do it.

In illustrating this point, I propose to shew,

I. What is that work to which the gospel calls, and with which sinners will not comply?

II. Why is it that sinners will not comply with this work?

III. Why this refusal should be retracted.

IV. Make some practical improvement.

I. I am to shew, What is that work to which the gospel calls, and with which sinners will not comply? It is the work of practical godliness, to which most men are strangers. It is a large work, as extensive as the commandment, which is exceeding broad. I shall take it up in these two.

1. The gospel calls you to fall to your salvation work, Phil. ii. 12, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Sinners, you are in a ruined condition; your souls are pining away in your iniquities; there is a burden of guilt on you that will sink you; there is a swarm of living lusts preying on you, that will devour you. O guilty creature! knowest thou not, that thou art God's enemy, justice's debtor, the law's criminal, and that the avenger of blood is at your heels? The gospel is calling you to consider your ways, and fall to the work of your salvation, before it be too late. This work has two parts: (1.) The work of faith, John vi. 29, "Jesus

answered and said, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Acts xvi. 31, "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." It is not that faith wherewith ye have lived in a good belief all your bypast days, so that you never had power to believe an ill tale of your own state; that is a faith of the devil's planting, and the gospel will have it rooted up. It is not that faith which consists in your going on in sin without fear. The devils' faith goes beyond this, for they believe and tremble, Jam. ii. 19. But the work of faith to which the gospel calls you, is that whereby a sinner, sensible of his undone state, flees out of himself to the Lord Jesus, to unite with him for righteousness and sanctification, 1 Cor. i. 30. It is that faith, which, when the house in which the presumptuous hoped, wherein the secure sinner rested in his sins, is overturned as by an earthquake, makes the sinner, naked and destitute, to flee to Jesus Christ, as the only rock and shelter. It is that whereby the sinner, sensible that he has lost his two eyes, and therefore cannot guide himself through the wilderness to Canaan, gives up himself wholly to Christ as his leader, prophet and healer; and seeing the flaming sword of justice pursuing him for sin, runs in under the covert of Jesus' blood, saying, This is my rest; and being willing to part with sin, but unable to master his lusts, puts himself under the protection of Christ as his King, that he may make havoc of his enemies. This, sinner, is your work, your foundation work. Haste, then, out of your natural state, and escape for your life to Jesus Christ.

2. The work of sanctification. Ezek. xviii. 31, "Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"—Heb. xii. 14, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Sin is the great devourer and destroyer, and therefore the great salvation is from sin. Jesus saves his people from their sins. To think of being saved in sin, is a contradiction; for to be left in it, is ruining. The sick man does not desire the physician to remove death, but yet spare his disease; yea, but the foolish sinner is thus unreasonable in the case of his soul; he has no will that his clothes be burnt, yet he will needs carry fire in his bosom; he wishes not his feet to be burned, yet he will walk on coals of fire. Living lusts will devour the soul; therefore to work, sinners, for you must either kill or be killed! Let not the vineyard of your souls be any more like that of the sluggard. The sinner's soul is overgrown with hurtful lusts, there is no fence about it. O! then, work; seek holiness.

3. The gospel calls you to your generation work. Acts xiii. 36, "For David, after he had served his own generation, by the will of God, fell on sleep." Wherefore were you sent into the world, and made members of society? Was it not to honour God, and to be useful to your fellow-servants? Surely God sent none of us into the world to play ourselves, like the leviathan in the sea; nor to be like mice and rats, good for nothing but to eat that for which others have laboured. Far less did he send you to be agents for the devil, to advance his kingdom, and to oppose the work of the Lord in the places where you live; nor yet like the beasts, only to eat, drink, work, and sleep. To your work, then, your proper work, the service of God. Perhaps ye will say, ye have not been idle; but what have ye done for God in your day? What have ye done for the good of any soul? What have ye done to pluck any brand out of the burning? I fear, if we reckon our days according to what we have done for God in them, most of us may reckon our days lost days. Look up to God, who placed you in the world, and say for what good purpose you have taken up room in his earth. For what use are you in the world? God has given you a talent, what have you gained? He has placed you in such and such situations and relations, have you done the duties of each? I am to shew,

II. Why is it that sinners will not comply with this work?

1. Because it is the work to which, of all works, their hearts are most averse. Rom. viii. 7, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." They would rather do any thing than go and work in God's vineyard. It is against the grain with unrenewed minds. The prodigal would rather feed swine than go back to his father, till he came to himself. Judas would rather go to a halter, than go to Christ for pardon. It is like cutting off a right hand, and plucking out a right eye. The sinner's neck is flexible enough to the devil's yoke; but it is an iron sinew to Christ's yoke. He that has a will to any thing, he has no will to this, till a day of power make him willing, Psalm cx. 3.

2. Because of prevailing love to carnal ease; Prov. xxvi. 15, "The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth." The man loves to sleep in a sound skin, and therefore will die in his nest, if God do not in mercy set a fire to it. Sloth is so sweet a sin, that the carnal heart can never get a fill of it, Prov. vi. 10, "yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep." The man lies in the bed of sloth, and would not miss heaven if it would fall down into his mouth, or if *wishing* and *woulding* would do it. But if these will

not do, he must even want it, for he cannot leave the embrace of his dear ease. Fighting, running, praying, striving, wrestling, using heavenly violence, and the like, he cannot away with.

3. Because Satan furnishes them with work more agreeable, and it they will do; therefore God's work they will not meddle with: John viii. 44, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." When the call of the gospel comes to sinners, Satan does with them as Pharaoh did with the Israelites, holds them more to their tasks; so they have always busy hands, and hearts full of their work, insomuch that they cannot get the work of religion minded to purpose. And what are they doing? They are busy weaving the spider's web; very busy doing nothing, or hatching the cockatrice egg, doing worse than nothing. They have much to do, having the desires of the flesh and mind to fulfil. They have more to do than they are able: they have the devil's swine to feed; they have a fry of living, lively, hungry lusts, that groan about their hearts, crying, Give, give, to satisfy. These they will serve all their days.

4. Because the world gives them another thing to do. Like the people invited to the marriage-supper, Luke xiv. 18, "They all with one consent begin to make excuse." There are too many of Pharaoh's mind, that think religion is only for them who have no other thing to do; as for them, they have no time for these things, and they wonder how any person should expect it of them. They are so delighted with considering what they shall eat and what they shall drink, that they cannot get time to think what they shall do to be saved. They have enough to do to get their daily bread, they cannot get their starving souls minded. They have so much to do to provide for to-day, and to-morrow, that they cannot get time to provide for eternity. They never had such joy in the everlasting covenant, in the benefits of it, or seals of it, which they have in a good bargain where they gain something. Therefore they live like moles in the earth, never to open their eyes, till in hell they lift them being in torment. I go on to enquire,

III. Why this refusal should be retracted? why they should repent and aim at compliance with the gospel-call.

1. Because this refusal is against the respect and duty which you owe to him who calls you to the work: Mal. i. 6, "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: If I then be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you. Have you no regard to the authority of God? or has not he that made you a power over you, to prescribe your work? Will ye follow the dictates of your own corrupt pas-

sions, even against the plain dictates of his Spirit? Shall we thus by our obstinacy affront our heavenly Father, and grieve his Spirit?

2. Because this refusal is full of the basest ingratitude. What is the meaning of all the gospel-calls, but—Sinners, do yourselves no harm? Your interest is advanced by working; Job xxxv. 7, "If thou be righteous, what givest thou him, or what receiveth he of thine hand?" If thou ply the work of religion, the advantage is thine own; if not, the loss remains alone with yourself: Prov. ix. 12, "If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it." It is a great favour that thou hast access to the work. Had not the Son of God made way for it through his own blood, thou hadst never got such a call.

3. It is the most foolish and unreasonable refusal that can be; and if the sinner were not out of himself, he could not be capable of it. What! will a starving man refuse to have meat when it is offered him? or will a convict refuse liberty? But this ye do in refusing Christ's call, and so judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life. Are sinners so foolish, as to hold fast and drink the cup of poison, when they are entreated to throw it away? This folly and madness will be bitterness in the end.

Lastly, You are ruined if you stand to your refusal. That obstinacy will bar you out of heaven and the favour of God for ever. Heaven is a rest prepared, not for loiterers, but for labourers; and you that will have your ease now, must bid farewell to it for ever in another world: Prov. i. 24, "Because I have called, and ye refused. I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, and I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me; for that they hated knowledge, and did choose the fear of the Lord." Salvation-work will not work, unless men bestir themselves; but damnation-work will go on when men sit at ease, and are carried down the stream into the ocean of the wrath of God.

IV. In the last place, I am to make some practical improvement; in doing which, I shall confine myself, for the present, to an use of exhortation. I would exhort refusers of Christ and of religion to take their word again, and to comply with the gospel-call. Ye have had many calls to engage in the work of religion with earnestness, but the answer of the most part is, I will not; and thus one refusal comes on the back of another.

You have had many calls from the word of God to fall to your work, and what has been your answer to these messages of God by his servants, but that—I will not? Have you not heard many exhortations which have never affected you? Have you not gone back to those very sins for which reproofs have met you in public ordinances, and yet you have held them fast? Has not duty been laid plainly before you, and you have found means to put it by? and still the answer is, I will not.

2. Has not God pursued some of you by afflictions to drive you to your work, and yet no awakening to repentance and reformation, but still the language of your practice has been, I will not. The Lord, in his holy providence, has sent you losses, crosses, and distresses of divers sorts, to bring you to your duty; but, O! may it not be written on rod after rod, You have not yet returned to the Lord?

3. Nay, has not the Lord sometimes so met you in a sinful course, that you could not but say, This is the finger of God? and yet ye would be froward, ye would go back to the sin again. What is the language of that, but—I will not? Have ye not fallen under Jotham's curse again and again? Judges ix. 15, whereby fire has flashed out of some one or other bramble, under which you have rested, on your faces to burn you, instead of that shade ye thought to find under it to refresh you. Has not your conscience awakened on you sometimes, and the arrows of conviction fastened on you, and yet you have refused? Ye have murdered convictions, and never been at ease till conscience has been silenced. You have run away from God, even with his arrows sticking in you, saying in opposition, I will not.

Lastly, Have you not often delayed complying with the call of God, and set the time for your going to work? Yet for all that is come and gone, your eyes have never seen that time yet. What is delaying but plainly a refusal?—"I will not." For there is no word of God that says, Go, work to-morrow, or the next day; it is, To-day, if ye will hear his voice; son, go work to-day. So that he that will not work to-day, but pretends he will do it afterwards, plainly refuses the call, and will not.

To promote your compliance with the call, I would offer a few weighty motives; as,

1. Repent now, and fall to that work ye have formerly refused; for it is a work preferable to all other works. The work of religion is your main, your chief work. (1.) It is the most pleasant work. Many are disgusted at the work of religion, because they think it unpleasant. But they have not yet tried it, and therefore are not fit judges. You have a more favourable account of it from Prov.

iii. 17, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." See also Psalm iv. 7, 8, "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased. I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety." There is work indeed in the vineyard that is very unpleasant to corrupt nature; but even out of this arises the most refined satisfaction to the new nature. And what are all the pleasures of the world, to reconciliation with God, and that peace of conscience and joy that there is in believing? (2.) It is the most profitable work. The profit thereof is both for time and for eternity; 1 Tim. iv. 8, "For bodily exercise profiteth little, but godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." The profits of it are durable profits: they last, and will be profitable, when all others will be of no avail. Hereby you will gain the life of your souls, and, as the loss is incomparably great, so also is the gain of it. (3.) It is the most necessary work. It is the one thing needful, absolutely needful, Luke x. 42. We cannot be happy here or hereafter without it; we are undone for ever.

2. Ye are always working something. The greatest idler on earth is in some sort always busy. God does not require of you more work, but other work. The soul of man is like a watch, that goes as fast in going wrong as in going right. How sad is it, that, seeing men are always doing something, they should refuse only that work which would honour God, and save their own souls! Will you not, then, for God's sake, and your own sake, change your work?

3. It is sad work you are working while you refuse this. If you be not working out your own salvation, you are working out your own damnation. We are always going forward; if not pressing a step nearer heaven, you are a step nearer hell. Every refusal, yea, every sin, is a new impediment in your way to heaven, a new call to Heaven for vengeance on the sinner, builds the separation-wall the higher, and lays on the greater weight to sink you for ever under the wrath of God.

4. Consider, if ye be not in some sort at as much pains to ruin your souls, as otherwise might save them. There are difficulties in the ways of sin, as well as in the ways of God. Is the work of religion a toilsome work? but do not ye many times weary yourselves to commit iniquity? Is there not as much pain when a sinner deprives himself of his night's rest, racking himself about the world, as when a saint communes with his heart on his bed about eternal things? The sinner travels to bring forth sin, Psalm vii. 14. What more than this at the hard duties of religion! Since he that en-

gages not in the work of religion is cumbered about many things, had he not better take up with the one thing needful? The saint has but one master to serve; sinners have many, not only at war with God, but at war among themselves, one lust dragging them one way, and another another way.

5. The time is coming, when working in the vineyard will be over; and if ye continue to refuse, ye know not if ever you will get another offer; "for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." This day's delay may be an eternal loss, for you may be in eternity before another day. A new refusal is dangerous; God may take you at your word.

6. Our Lord is content yet to invite you to his work, notwithing your former refusals; you will still be accepted: "Him that cometh unto me," says Jesus, "I will in nowise cast out."

7. Whatever hardships may be in the work of religion, it is not long ere you shall be freed from them all; you shall be made more than conquerors: "You shall rest from your labours, and your works shall follow you."

Lastly, If you will not, then remember death will make you change your mind, and you will get a long eternity to repent that ye did not repent in time. But such a change can then be of no avail, but to increase your misery. Infinitely better, then, will it be for you if this change take place at present; "for now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation."

THE NATURE AND EFFECTS OF A WEANED DISPOSITION OF SOUL.*

SERMON IV.

PSALM CXXXI. 2,

My soul is even as a weaned child.

THIS psalm is David's profession of piety, wherein he discovers what was the habitual bent of his heart, and course of his life. The occasion of it seems to have been the injury done him by Saul and his courtiers, who reproached him as a proud, ambitious, and turbulent man. His comfort is the testimony of his own conscience,

* Delivered on Sabbath afternoon, August 1, 1714.

which witnessed, 1. The humility of his heart. This kept him from an aspiring temper, and within the bounds of his station. 2. His easiness in any condition with which the Lord was pleased to tryst him. God had promised him the kingdom, yet kept him from it long, and that in very hard circumstances; but yet he was easy under it; he was far from that restless itching after a crown, of which his enemies accused him.

In the text, he points out the spring of this easiness: "My soul is even as a weaned child:" that is, his heart was loosed from those things to which the hearts of men naturally are glued. There is here, 1. Something supposed, namely, that the day was, when he was sucking the breasts which fallen Adam led all his children to, as well as others; that he was even as fond of them, and could as ill want them, as a child the breast. 2. Something expressed; that now there was a change, the child was weaned, set to another way of living, and could want the breasts. God had taken off his heart from those things on which naturally it was set, and now he fed at God's hand, instead of creatures'. He does not speak of willingly forsaking these breasts of his own accord, but he was weaned by the power of grace. Now, this is his comfort against the aspersions of his enemies. From this subject I take this

DOCTRINE, That grace makes a weaned soul.

In discoursing which, I shall inquire,

I. From what does grace wean the soul?

II. How is the soul weaned from these things?

III. What are the effects of a weaned disposition of soul?

IV. Make some practical improvement.

I am to inquire,

I. From what does grace wean the soul? Grace weans the soul, 1. From the dry breasts of the world. One part of pure religion, and undefiled, before God and the Father, is to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, James i. 27. For, says John, 1st Ep. ii. 16, "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." The soul of man is not self-sufficient, and must fetch in its satisfaction from something without itself, seeing it is capable to desire what it hath not to furnish itself with. Our first father Adam did us two ill turns; he led us out of the path of life, not knowing how to get into it again, and so left us with a conscience full of guilt; he led us away from the living God, not knowing how to return to him again, and so left us with a heart full of unsatisfied desires. Hence the poor soul is like the horse leech, having two daughters crying,

Give, give; a restless conscience, and a restless heart, to each of which it must say, as Naomi to Ruth, chap. iii. 1, "My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?" But alas! the first way it goes for that, is through dry places, as the devil, when he goes out of a man. For the restless conscience seeks rest in the dry and barren region of the law, Rom. x. 3, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness;" for the restless heart goes to the creatures, saying, Who will shew us any good? The poor soul, like a hungry infant, weeps and crys, shifts about as it can, gaping for something to fill the mouth. The world is nearest, and there it fastens and sucks. The soul has fallen off the breasts of divine consolations, and cannot set itself on again, and therefore takes up with the breasts of the world; but grace takes off the soul again. And,

1. Grace weans the soul from the profits of the world: Heb. xi. 26, "Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures in Egypt." The natural man fixes on them, drinks greedily at the broken cisterns. His hungry heart flies out after them, as a ravenous bird after its prey; he is restless till he get them, as the child is for the breasts; he is fond of them, when he has them, as the infant plays with the breasts. They say they are become rich, they have found out substance, Hos. xii. 8. But when grace comes, it stops the chase. It makes the bulky vanity, that can only satisfy the fancy of children, and not souls of men, dwindle into nothing.

2. Grace weans the soul from the pleasures of the world. Pleasure is a necessary ingredient in happiness, and men cannot but seek it; hence God proposes it to the soul in the enjoyment of himself, Psalm xvi. 11, "In his presence there is fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for ever more." But the soul, instead of going to God for it, to drink at the pure fountain, naturally goes to the muddy streams of it in the world, and there sucks,—is as fond of the lusts of Egypt, flesh, &c. as the Israelites; yea, can as little live without them, as the sucking child without the breast: 2 Tim. iii. 4, "They are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." But when grace comes, it makes the soul fall off, and looses the heart from these things.

3. In a word, grace weans the soul from all worldly comforts whatsoever, making it take up its rest in God: Luke xiv. 6, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." The heart of man takes a greedy grip,

naturally, of relations, liberty, life, and such things. These are their good things, which they can no more part with than the child with the breasts. Take these away, what has the man more? He has not a God. He will rather part with God and Christ than these things. But grace puts matters right; it regulates the affection to these things, and makes a soul ready to give up with them at God's call.

2. Grace weans the soul from the foulsome breasts of sin, so that it loaths that which it loved before. The soul in its natural state is like Israel, Ezek. xvi. 4, "Not cut, neither washed in water to supple them; not salted at all, nor swaddled at all." They had lain long in the foul womb of Egypt, and after they came out, they were still sucking in the Egyptian manners, customs, and abominable courses. Thus men suck the breasts of sin; they seek satisfaction in those things which they ought not so much as desire; they greedily drink of what God forbids them to taste; they are as fond of their sins as a child is of the breast, their hearts are averse to part with their sinful courses. There is a sweetness in these to their corrupt hearts, which they cannot want. For, let a man go the round of all created lawful gratifications in the world, and squeeze the sap out of them all to satisfy his heart, they are so empty, that he will break over the hedge, to try if forbidden fruits will make up the want which allowed fruits cannot do. But grace weans the heart from these breasts. It makes the person say, "That which I see not, teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do so no more," Job xxxiv. 32.

II. How the soul is weaned from these things?

1. Grace lays gall and wormwood upon these breasts, and so embitters them to the soul that it is made willing to give over sucking them. The heart is made loath to part with them; and though it is often about to give up with them, yet it still goes back again, hoping to suck sweeter than before; but still the gall and wormwood lies there, and more and more is laid on till the heart be actually weaned. The way is hedged up with thorns. Hence, "she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then it was better with me than now," Hos. ii. 6, 7. Now, there are two things that serve to embitter these breasts. (1.) Continual disappointments from them. Though the man is always seeking satisfaction from them, he can never get it. Like the prodigal, Luke xv. 16, "He would fain fill his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him." The man is like one in a mist: he sees something, and it appears a house; he comes to it, and it is but a stone. His hope

rises again on another view, comes forward to it, and it is but a bush. They fall always short of expectation; and his most blooming hopes are blasted. When he is going to take in the most pleasant fruit, providence makes it even fall between the hand and the mouth, Hos. ix. 2, "The floor and the winepress shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail in her." Let him make his bed where he will, there is always a thorn in it. (2.) Severe wounds arise from them. The man leans with great delight on the broken reed; and ere he is aware, it pierceth through his hand. He sucks eagerly at the breast, and, instead of milk, wrings out blood. When striking the rock for water, instead of it, the fire flashes out in his face. Perhaps from the very thing from which he expected his greatest comfort, arises his greatest cross. Rachel must have children, else she dies; she gets them, and dies bringing them forth. But all this will not wean the soul; therefore,

2. The Lord fills the soul with better things; "Open thy mouth wide," says God, "and I will fill it," Psalm lxxxi. 10. If the nurse take away the breast, she will not put an empty spoon into the child's mouth. The soul of man is an empty, wavering thing, must always have something to feed on; and will hold what it has as good for it, till it get what it counts better. The man will not quit hold of the world and his lusts, till he open his hand to take hold of Christ and all the benefits of the everlasting covenant in their stead. Therefore, the great transaction of the soul with Christ is called buying of him, in which if a man gives away his money, he gives it not but for as good, or better. Thus grace weans the soul; for, saith Jesus, John iv. 14, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." Hence, two things are evident. (1.) That only the enjoyment of God can wean the soul, and the soul will never be at rest till it rest in God. The heart of man must have a match, and will be ranging through the world for a match, till it meet with Christ, who is the pearl of great price; and, to gain this, quits with all. The soul of man will be a restless night-walker till the day of grace dawn, and discover Jesus the plant of renown. If they cannot work themselves happy, they will try to dream themselves happy, and prepare themselves a feast of a thousand airy nothings; possessions of the heart, though not of the hand. (2.) That the soul will never be boasted away from these breasts. The very dung, and asses' heads, will be precious in Samaria when there is no bread. Who is there that has not rational conviction of the world's vanity? yet men throng into the house, craving a fill. Why is it that men

so often seem to give up with it, and in very deed have satisfaction in nothing, and yet go just back to the same door, where they have got a thousand nay-says, and seemed to have got their last answer? Why, truly, the devil is gone out of the house, but it is empty, it is not filled from heaven, and it must not stand empty; therefore, he returns with seven spirits worse than himself. I shall now inquire,

III. What are the effects of a weaned disposition of soul?

The soul is weaned at its first conversion to God. Then it is taken off the breasts; but it is hard work, and tedious. The soul is never perfectly weaned till death. As there is an uneasiness and fretfulness in new weaned children, till thoroughly weaned, so is there in the case of the children of God while here. Hence it is said to them, Psalm xlv. 10, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear: forget also thine own people, and thy father's house." So the effects of this disposition are more or less strong, as souls are more or less thoroughly weaned. I shall notice some of these effects.

1. The weaned soul is a resigned soul: "If any man," said Jesus, Matth. xvi. 24, "will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." When the soul is weaned, the long war betwixt our own will and the will of God is at an end, and our will runs captive after the wheels of the Lord's triumphant chariot. The will of the weaned soul is moulded, (1.) To the will of God's commandments. The stony heart is broken, yea, melted down, to receive the impression of whatever is God's will for our duty. Its language is, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" No right hand, or right eye, more to be spared. They esteem all God's precepts concerning all things to be right, and they hate every false way, Psalm cxix. 128. All carnal reasonings, in favour of lusts, must yield to the great authority of the Lawgiver. (2.) To the will of his providence. It will no more rally its forces, to decide the question, whether God's will or their will shall carry it as to their lot; but as the weaned child is at the nurse's disposal, so will they be at God's. If that which is crooked cannot be made straight, they will comply with it as it is. If their lot cannot be brought up to their mind, their mind shall be brought down to their lot. Like Paul, "they learn, in whatsoever state they are, therewith to be content," Phil. iv. 11.

2. The weaned soul is cheerful, and not fretful in its resignation. He says, not only just, but "Good is the will of the Lord," Isa. xxxix. 8. It makes a man carry Christ's yoke evenly; for, to go drooping under it, is a sign of a heart not right weaned. What

God does is not only well done, but best done; so says the weaned soul.

3. The weaned soul stands on other grounds, when created comforts are with him, and even when created streams are running full: he draws his support in both cases from God as the fountain. Such say, like Hannah, 1 Sam. ii. 1, "My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord;" and, with David, Psalm xviii. 46, "The Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock: and let the God of my salvation be exalted." The world's good things shall not be their good things. They will love them as a friend, but not be wedded to them as a husband. They will use them as a staff, but not build upon them as a pillar.

4. The weaned soul will stand without them when these are gone, for they were not the props on which his house rested. Such a soul can adopt the prayer of Habakkuk, chap. iii. 17, 18, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be found in the vine; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Ah! that soul is in a sad case, whose comfort waxeth and weaneth, just according to the waxing and weaning of created comforts; is satisfied or starved, just according as these breasts are full or empty. Thus many lose all spirit and life in religion, when God takes away their worldly comforts.

5. The weaned soul uses creative comforts passingly. They follow the directions of Paul, 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31, "That both they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away." The greedy grip the heart takes of these things, in the use of them, is a sad sign of an unweaned soul. It was the sin of the old world, they were eating and drinking like beasts. The weaned soul will do in these like the dogs of Egypt, who run when they lap the water of the Nile, for fear of the crocodiles.

6. The weaned soul casts itself upon the Lord, without carnal anxiety, as the weaned child depends on the mother's care. This seems partly aimed at in the text. The soul is easy not on a sensible prospect, but on the faith of the promise. They are "careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let their requests be made known to God," Phil. iv. 6.

Lastly, The weaned soul strives to starve, but never to provide

for their lusts. These are the suckers, which, the more they are satisfied, just the more they crave. They have much to do who have these to feed.

IV. It remains to make some practical improvement. And,

1. In an use of information. This shews us, (1.) Who they are that have met with Christ, and been feasted at this communion; even those whose souls are now like a weaned child. Are your hearts turned to loath your lusts, weaned from sucking the dry breasts of the world, and ye must have your food from heaven? then the Lord is not sending you away empty. (2.) Your hearts are *not* right with God, while they are not weaned. If no weaning influences have reached your hearts, no gracious influences have. You will be nothing the better of this communion; nay, it is like you will be the worse of it; if you get not your hearts weaned on this occasion, your lusts will be more rampant after this; like the child that is most fond of the breast after it has been long away from it.

2. Use of exhortation. I exhort you to labour to get a weaned soul. To urge you to this, I would propose the following motives. (1.) How sad is it that a heaven-born soul should be held at such fulsome breasts as those fleshly lusts are, at such empty breasts as those of the world are! Is there not better food, and more plentiful, set before you, even Christ himself, and all the benefits of the everlasting covenant? Leave those to the swine, and let your precious souls eat that which is good. (2.) Your souls will never get satisfaction there. You shall as soon fill your hands with the wind, or grasp your arms full of dreams and shadows, as fill your souls at the dry breasts of the world. It is spending your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not. (3.) They are altogether unsuitable to your souls. The soul is spiritual, they are earthly things; your souls are immortal, they are perishing; and ye can no more feed on them to thrive, than fishes on meadows; nor in the breasts of your lusts, no more than salt water will quench thirst. (4.) A weaned soul would make you very easy. The man that has it can never be miserable, meet with what he will. The heaviest cross would be very light, if eased of the overweight an unweaned soul lays upon it. What is the rise of so much uneasiness, but that we are wedded to this and the other thing, and being exceeding glad to have it, are exceeding sorry to part with it. It would make you easy to others also. (5.) An unweaned soul is the root of apostacy; it will expose you to many temptations, and may carry you off from the way of the Lord altogether. It will make you a reproach to religion; and it had been better for you not to have known the way

of righteousness, than, after you have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto you, 2 Pet. ii. 21. If ye go back ye shall not feed on the seat at so cheap a rate as before. (6.) A weaned soul will fit you for suffering; and you have need of it, when the work of God is in such danger. It will keep you safe in times of trial, when others, glued to the world and lusts, will turn their backs. (7.) It will fit you for communion with God, and you shall have it. The manna fell, when the provision brought from Egypt was done. *Lastly*, It will fit you for heaven; and there you shall be filled.

In conclusion, study the mortification of your lusts. What need for these things, if you had not living lusts to feed on them? Feed on Christ and spiritual things. Take him instead of that which the world and lusts offer. Amen.

THE DANGER OF NOT WAITING ON GOD AFTER THE DUE ORDER.*

SERMON V.

1 CHRON. XV. 13,

For because ye did it not at the first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.

THE ark of God having been brought from Kirjath-jearim, and left at the house of Obed-edom, upon the account of the death of Uzza, whom God smote, God blessed that man and his house, where the ark was. The news of this coming to David's ears, he resolves again to attempt the bringing of the ark into his own city, 2 Sam. vi. 12. In this transaction, observe. 1. That the fear of mismanaging a duty may sometimes prevail so far with the people of God, as to make them lay by the duty for a time. David had seen how dear a rash touch of the ark had cost Uzzah; so, says he, 2 Sam. vi. 9, "How shall the ark of the Lord come unto me?" The fear of God, by reason of corruption, easily degenerates into a slavish fear, which cuts the sinews of holy endeavours, and leaves people neither heart nor hand for the work. 2. Lay by duty who will, God will always have some that will take it up. If David have no will for the ark to be with him, Obed-edom will entertain it. Many, in our own day, turn their backs on Christ, and his service; shut their hearts against himself, and their houses against his worship;

* Delivered August 2, 1707.

but God will always have some that will put their shoulders to his work. 3. They are great fools that lay aside duty. They stand in the way of their own mercy, and deprive themselves of that blessing that attends the service of the Lord. 4. The people of God, when they take up duty again, will see themselves the greater fools that ever they laid it by. Well, David, being resolved on the work, proceeds with great caution and circumspection, as we see in the verses preceding that of our reading: the reason of all which we have in the text.

In which words there is, 1. An old story brought fresh to mind: "The Lord our God made a breach upon us." The stroke reached Uzzah, and cut him off, while all the rest were safe; yet the holy man looks on that as a stroke to the whole congregation. 2. There is the cause of the stroke: The stroke was dreadful and astonishing, but the holy man lays not the blame on God, but on themselves, and so justifies God. The sin of the Levites was the cause of the stroke: "For because ye did not at the first," namely, sanctify yourselves when ye first began to remove the ark from Kirjath-jearim. They did not sanctify and prepare themselves, by solemn prayer and services, in consideration of God's will, as to the way of carrying the ark; as if he had said, We have smarted already by your carelessness, beware of it therefore at this time. The sin of all the congregation, wherein he takes in himself among the rest, also produced the stroke; and that because it was his and the people's duty to have been acquainted with the word of the Lord; and the oversight of the Levites did not excuse them. We sought him, indeed, bringing the ark, the symbol of God's presence, from the place where it was, to be in the midst of us; but our way of doing marred all. It was God's ordinance that the ark should be carried on the Levites' shoulders, Numb. iv. 15, and vii. 9; but the Philistines had put it on a cart. God did not punish them for this transgression, and this emboldened Israel to follow their example: but they learned by sad experience, that God would not bear that in the one, which he did in the other.—From this subject, I take this

Doctrine, God is highly displeased with persons who perform duties, but are not careful to perform them in a right manner.

In discoursing which, I shall shew,

I. How it comes to pass that men perform duties, but are not careful to perform them in a right manner.

II. How the Lord testifies his displeasure against such persons.

III. Why is the Lord so highly displeased?

IV. Make some practical improvement.

I am to shew,

I. How it comes to pass that men perform duties, but are not careful to perform them in a right manner.

1. Because to perform duty is the easiest part of religion, but to do it in a right manner is very difficult; and few people have a heart to manage the difficulties of religion. Ease is sweet; and in other things we see it very ordinary for men to take what is most easy instead of what is most profitable. It is an easy thing to think, to hear, to eat bread, and drink wine; but to plough up our corruptions, to engage in good earnest in the service of God, and to get the heart in a case for fellowship with Christ, is not easy, and sloth prevails.

2. Because the bare performance of duties is within the reach of all, the performing of them in a right manner is beyond the reach of the most part. Natural abilities will serve for the one, gracious abilities are necessary for the other. John xv. 5, "I (said Jesus) am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." "By faith (says Paul, Heb. xi. 4), Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh." Grace, you see, is necessary, and grace is very rare. A natural man is conjured within the circle of self, beyond it he cannot move; this is his principle, and this is his end. Nature cannot carry a man above itself, more than the mouth of a river can be higher than the spring-head. This, then, mars all, so that the service can no more be acceptable to God, than a man sowing his master's ground with his own seed, to reap it for himself.

3. By the bare performance of duties, men attain the base and low ends which they propose to themselves in the service of God; namely, (1.) Peace of mind, such as it is. The consciences of some are but half awakened; thus a little thing quiets them, even the external performance of duties; but should these neglect duties altogether, they could have no peace. (2.) It gains a man credit in the world, and that is a strong cord to draw men to the outside of duties, namely to be seen of men, and to have glory of men, as our Saviour expresses it, Matth. vi. 1, 2. It is to them no small matter to have a name to live; to be called good is affected by such as are at no pains to be good.

What shall we say of these that will set about duties, and attend sacraments, even while they are sure that they will be mocked and reproached for it by the wicked? Answ. It is good in so far as they are carried over these things; for, alas! there are some so pitifully weak, that they will be blown over with the wind of the

mouth of the wicked. A broad laugh, or silly taunt, out of the mouth of the profane, is an unanswerable argument against religion and seriousness, to some who are in the cause of Christ like silly doves without heart. Such as are thus chargeable are very inconsiderate; Christ gives a solemn warning to them, Mark viii. 38, "Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." We doubt not but a hypocrite may come this length. We do not wonder if even a miser, a covetous wretch, part with his money to buy land; neither need we wonder if a hypocrite should sacrifice credit among the profane, to gain credit among the godly. He does but as a man on a ladder, tread on the lower step to win to the higher.

4. Because men may get duties done, and keep their lusts too. For instance, they may go to a communion-table one day, and the next to the table of devils. But to perform duties in a right manner, is inconsistent with peace with our lusts: Psalm lxvi. 18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Hence, over the belly of an express commandment, people will venture to the Lord's table without self-examination, or at least without searching to the quick. They cannot, however, communicate aright without a due attention to it. No, indeed. Says the apostle, 1 Cor. xi. 28, "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." Many, notwithstanding, can communicate without it, and keep their lusts too; here is the hellish advantage. There are secret lusts, which the man is unwilling to disturb, therefore he will not light the candle and search, lest he be obliged to cast out the old leaven.

5. Because most men have low and mean thoughts of God, Mal. i. 6—8, "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master, if, then, I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name: and ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon my altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor, will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts." It is not every one that knows the Lord. Many men worship they know not what, and therefore they offer him for worship they care not what. If men had awful apprehensions of that God whom they worship, as a God greatly to be "feared in the

assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him," Psalm lxxxix. 7, doubtless they would see, that there is none in heaven or earth like him, and they would worship him in another manner.—Therefore the apostle, to engage men to take care how they perform duties, says, "Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire," Heb. xii. 28, 29.

I am now to shew,

II. How the Lord testifies his displeasure against such persons. He does so,

1. By withdrawing from them in religious services: "Son of man," says God by Ezekiel, chap. xi. 3, "these men have set up their idols in their hearts, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face; should I be inquired of at all by them?" And by Hosea he says, chap. v. 4, "The spirit of whoredom is in the midst of them, and they have not known the Lord." It is granted, ordinances are the galleries wherein the King is held; they are the trysting-places where Christ meets with his people; but if they be not gone about in a right manner, they will be but an empty sepulchre: "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" The living God is not to be found in a dead worship; when men withdraw their hearts from the service of God, then he withdraws himself from them; and it is but sorry entertainment a man can have at this feast, when the Master goes away.

2. By rejecting their services, Mal. i. 13, "Ye said also, Behold what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this at your hands? saith the Lord." God will not accept of such duties, whatever pains men may take about them, Isa. i. 11, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord." It is better to go halting on in the right way, than to be going straight in the way of error: "The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city," Eccl. x. 15. It may well be applied to the duties of some, what is said, Hab. ii. 13, "The people shall labour in the fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity." To labour in the fire signifies great pains, and great disappointments; they work in the midst of scorching flames, and what they do produce consumes between their fingers, they get no good of it.

3. By spiritual strokes upon their souls. There is a curse denounced against them, Jer. xlviii. 10, "Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully;" and Mal. i. 14, "But cursed be the

deceiver which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing. This will pierce the soul; and they are of two sorts: (1.) They are deadening strokes; these are silent blows, arrows that fly without noise from the hand of an angry God into the soul; "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert, and be healed," Isa. vi. 10. Sometimes men are like Saul among the prophets, but afterwards they are knocked on the head, it may be on a communion Sabbath, and from that time God answers them not. Many are sprightly professors for a while, but at length God is so provoked, that their hearts are deadened, their affections withered, their consciences stupified, their souls blasted, and they are then prepared to be pruned off, and cast over the hedge. (2.) Quickening strokes, whereby the man's name is changed; he is Mager-Missabid. The conscience is made like Mount Sinai, where nothing but thunder, lightning, and the sound of the trumpet, are to be heard. God takes the filthy rags of their lifeless duties, wraps them in brimstone, and then sets them on fire about the sinner's ears; so that, like the house built upon the sand, to which the man betook himself for shelter, the whole falls into ruins. As to this, you will observe what the prophet declares, Hos. v. 11—14, "Ephraim is oppressed, and broken in judgment; because he willingly walked after the commandment. Therefore will I be unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness. When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound; then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jereb: yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound. For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah; I, even I, will tear, and go away: I will take away, and none shall rescue him."

4. By strokes upon their bodies. Sometimes the Lord has mingled his people's blood with their sacrifices. Thus he did with Nadab and Abihu, Lev. x. 1, 2. A wrong look into the ark cost the men of Bethshemesh dear: "The Lord smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men," 1 Sam. vi. 19. Uzziah, taking hold of the ark, was struck dead, 2 Sam. vi. 7. And the apostle tells, 1 Cor. xi. 30, that for profaning the Lord's supper, "many (among the Corinthians) were weak and sickly, and many sleep," that is, were dead. One dies before his time, even in his strength; another falls sick, it may be after a communion. At communions there is a great throng; perhaps one has got a thurst, another has catched cold, but unworthy communicating has more often done the deed.—I shall enquire,

III. Why is the Lord so highly displeased?

1. Because God commands his service to be done in a right manner. The matter and right manner of performing duties are, in the command of God, linked together. He will have his service well done, as well as really done. We must serve God with a perfect heart and a willing mind, for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts; if we seek him, he will be found of us; but if we forsake him, he will cast us off for ever, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. Masters on earth challenge to themselves a power to oblige their servants, not only to do their work, but to do it so and so; and though they do the thing itself, yet if not in the manner required, it cannot be accepted. So they brought the ark, but they brought it on a cart, which was opposite to the command, for it should have been on the shoulders of the Levites; and therefore their service was rejected with vengeance.

2. Because the doing of a duty in a wrong manner alters the nature of it, and makes it sin. Hence the plowing of the wicked is sin. Hence prayer is accounted a howling on their bed, Hos. vii. 14. And unworthy communicating is not to eat the Lord's supper, 1 Cor. xi. 20. If a house be built of never so strong timber and good stones, yet if it be not well-founded and right built, the inhabitant may curse the day he came under the roof of it.

3. Because duties not performed according to the right order, are but the half of the service we owe to God, and the worst half too. The Jews had it written about the doors of their synagogues, "Prayer without intention is as a body without a soul." A skeleton of bones without the flesh would have been a very abominable sacrifice to have laid upon God's altar; no less abominable are our services, when the heart is not engaged, and when the soul is not lifted up to God: "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth," John iv. 24.

Lastly, Because duties thus performed are very dishonourable to God. See again, Mal. i. 6—8. Now, God is a holy God, and will be sanctified in them that come nigh him, and before all the people he will be glorified, Lev. x. 3. He is a jealous God in the matter of his worship, Josh. xxiv. 18.

IV. I am now to make a practical improvement. And this,

1. In a use of information. We may hence see what a mercy it is that we have a pure worship amongst us at this day; a worship neither defiled by idolatry, nor corrupted by superstition, but after the divine order, according to the pattern shown on the mount. It is dangerous to join in a way of worship not warranted by the word of God.

2. Let this fill us with a holy reverence of God when we approach

his presence in this venerable ordinance, Psalm lxxxix. 7. Let us know and remember, that the God with whom we have to do is a heart-searching, holy, and jealous God, who will not hold them guiltless that profane his ordinances. Was he so displeased with Belshezzar, for abusing the vessels of the temple? how much more with us, if we profane the symbols of the body and blood of his Son! The danger is great, both for soul and body. But there are two sorts that are ready to abuse this. (1.) The stiff-necked careless sinner will cloak his contempt of communicating, and his sloth with this: "If it be so, then we will do best not to meddle with it." But, O Sirs! is there not an odds between rushing on the sacrament, and forsaking it? Assure yourselves this contempt of the sacrament is damning. God can reach a blow to you, though ye stand far off from his table; and so much the more, that you slight the love-token of a dying Lord. (2.) The poor broken-hearted sinner will be ready to drink up discouragement from this, fearing that he may be the person on whom the Lord will make the breach. But, poor soul! I would say to thee, Where wilt thou be safe, if thou keepest thyself without the ranges? the sword of the Lord may overtake thee there, for the neglect of your duty. Therefore come, though trembling, venture thyself at his feet; acknowledge, that if he should make thee a monument of his justice, he is most just, thou deservest it. A trembling hand may receive a pardon. Be diligent to prepare thyself; and when thou hast done all, lay no stress on any thing, but flee to Christ, and get him between an offended God and thy soul. Dry stubble may be safe before a consuming fire, if there be a crystal wall between it and the fire.

I conclude with exhorting all that intend to sit down at the Lord's table to-morrow, to take heed how ye communicate. I would urge you to do it in the right order. Ye have heard the danger of an opposite conduct; this may be sufficient under this. Another motive is, that duty done in a right manner, and that only, has the blessing connected with it: mark Matth. xxiv. 26, "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing." A man may pray a thousand times, and never be heard; go from one communion to another, and never be sealed; one sincere groan from the heart will do more than all these. If ye mismanage this sacrament, your souls may get such a stain that they will never cast again; and if ye manage it rightly, ye may get such a taste of the goodness of the Lord as ye never got before. With this view, see that ye be right as to your state; that you be the friends of the Bridegroom, or you have no right to sit down at the marriage-feast. It is not the due order, for persons dead in sin to sit down

at the table of our Lord; it is an ordinance only for those who are quickened, and made spiritually alive; it is the children's bread, and therefore they only, who are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, have a right to it. Endeavour to be in a right frame; to have grace in exercise; a holy hunger, faith, repentance, and love. It is not enough that you have oil in your lamps, you must also have your lamps trimmed, and the oil burning. Your graces must be in exercise. If this be your state, and this be your frame, then surely it will be good for you to draw near to God at his own table: "They that thus wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up on wings like eagles, run and not be weary, walk and not faint."

THE PERFECTION OF PROVIDENTIAL DISPENSATIONS.*

SERMON VI.

PSALM xviii. 30,

As for God, his work is perfect.

THE Psalmist by this time had followed the Lord through many a deep step, and he had endured various troubles. Here, in the text, he looks back on these ways in which the Lord had led him, and gives his verdict as to them: "As for God," &c. In the words there is,

1. A magnificent preface: "As for God." He stands up here in his defence against an ungodly world, to justify his proceedings: "As for God," I that have tried his way can speak to his commendation.

2. What of God he commends: His way. There is a twofold way. (1.) That wherein men walk to and with God.—Personal; Christ, who is the way to the Father:—Real; holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. None of these are here meant. (2.) The way wherein God walks with men, the way of his providences, his dispensations, the way he takes with men in disposing of them.

3. The commendation is perfect; there is no flaw in that way. Be his dispensations never so hard, there can be no fault really observed in them by the most discerning eye; they are faultless. These words afford us this

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Doct. That the dispensations of providence are altogether perfect and faultless, however they appear to our carnal hearts.

In illustration I shall,

I. Take notice of some, among many, seeming faults our corruptions would spy out in the dispensations of providence.

II. Inquire in what respects the way of God is perfect.

III. Confirm the point.

IV. Make some practical improvement.

I. I am to take notice of some, among many, seeming faults our corruptions would spy out in the dispensations of providence.

1. The reason of dispensations not seen. The design of Providence lies oftentimes hid, and it is no easy matter to discover it: "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known," Psalm lxxvii. 19. The Lord leads the man and he knows not where; therefore corruption is ready to storm at this, and disdains to follow the Lord, unless he will tell him what way he is going; but the fault is in the eye, not in the way. Time is big with the discovery, but must go a while before it is brought forth: Acts x. 17, "Now, while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate." John xiii. 6, 7, "Then cometh Jesus to Simon Peter; and Peter said unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." When the spectacles of faith are on, no fault appears.

2. Providence seeming to forget the promises, and the word seeming to miscarry. Then we are ready to say, as in Jer. xv. 18, "Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail?" Abraham thought he saw this fault, and he would take a way of his own to rectify it. But though the promise tarried, yet it was accomplished, for Isaac, and not Ishmael, was to be his heir. Fools' haste is no speed.

3. Providence going cross to the promises, his works to his word, pulling down with the one hand what he seemed to be building up with the other. Thus it appeared, when Abraham was commanded to sacrifice Isaac, Gen. xxii. So also it was when God threatened to cut short the days of Hezekiah, Isa. xxxviii. 1. But there is no fault here yet; wait the end, as in these instances; they are but raw travellers, who think that the way lies always even forward; the way in the wilderness is often crooked.

4. Providence running, as it seems, quite contrary to the design

of it. Many times the Lord has a design on foot for the good of his church and people; but a continued tract of disappointments cross it more and more, till the very grave-stone seems to be laid upon it. Thus it was with Joseph, when he was put into the dungeon. But what fault is there here, more than when the sun sets to make it darker and darker, till day-break. Stay till the dawning of the design. Oftentimes providence reads best backwards: "For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left," Deut. xxxii. 36.

5. Providence laying aside the most likely means. But where is the fault here? for if he lay aside these means; he will accomplish his designs by other means, and what though they be unlikely? This stumbled the world, 1 Cor. i. 23, 24, "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks, foolishness: But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Naaman in distress stumbled at the unlikeliness of the means prescribed by the prophet for the cure of his leprosy, 2 Kings v. 11. The disciples of Jesus also stumbled, and judged the death of Christ a very unlikely mean of leading him and them to glory; and they had the same opinion of his ascension, John xvi. 6, 7. Men have their own ways: they will needs think that they know best what is good for them. But God knows that his people are not good choosers of their own lot, and sovereignty will have a latitude.

6. Providence falling on means quite contrary to the design of it. But what the worse was the blind man that he was cured with clay put upon his eyes? The Lord works healing by wounding, and comfort by tears. The earthquake, the troubling of the waters, the dungeon of Joseph, the den of Daniel, the whale of Jonah, yea, we know, that "all things work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose," Rom. viii. 28.

7. Wicked godless men getting the sunny side of the brae, walking contrary to God, and yet providence smiles, that never an ill turn almost misgives in their hand. This made Asaph stammer, Psalm lxxiii. 12—14, "Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world, they increase in riches. Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." It shook Jeremiah, chap. xii. 1. 2. But there is no fault in this, that the sun of prosperity rises on the wicked: "For when the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they may be destroyed for ever," Psalm xcii. 7. The sun rose fair

on Sodom that very day on which it was destroyed; all Israel followed Absalom; Jonah fled from the presence of the Lord; Haman finds all things going to his wish. But see the end of all these things.

8. Astonishing strokes lighting on those that are most dear to God. Eccl. viii. 14, "There is a vanity which is done upon the earth, that there be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked." Eli's sons are slain, his daughter-in-law dies, and himself breaks his neck. The two sons of Aaron die at the altar. How numerous were the afflictions that came upon Job. But where is the fault here? Christ's cross, to a child of God, is better than the world's crown, 2 Cor. xii. 9. 10.

9. Great afflictions meeting the Lord's people in the way of duty. This was Jacob's case in many instances. He was in the way God bade him go, yet he met with many trials and afflictions. It hath been so also with many of the Lord's people in all ages. But the Lord has his holy ends in these things; he shews them that they are sinful creatures; though they are in his way, tries their faith and patience, and makes way for higher experiences.—I am,

II. To shew in what respects the way of God is perfect.

1. All the dispensations of providence are exactly according to the pattern shown in the word. If you would know wherein a man has exactly built a house, look to the draught given him. Meet with what we will, all may be reduced to, and explained by, scripture doctrines, prophecies, promises, threatenings, or examples.

2. They are exactly suited to the necessities of his people, and to the designs of them. God weighs every grain of sand which he puts in our glasses; he will never put in too little, nor too much; nothing wanting, nothing superfluous. Deut. xxxii. 4, "He is the Rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is he."

3. In respect of the times of them. Nothing too soon done, nor too late; all fall out in their proper season, determined in the unchangeable council of God.

4. In respect of its stability. Our ways are unstable, and that is a great fault; but God's ways are not so. That which is crooked cannot be made straight. There will always be a crook in our lot. That is sure, and we could not walk even without it.—I shall,

III. Confirm the point. Consider,

1. That the saints in their experience see this. They readily and fully acknowledge it, Hos. xiv. 9, "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them, but the

transgressors shall fall therein." This is their unanimous vote when in a right mood, and will be so in heaven, when the web is out. Then will they say, "He hath done all things well."

2. That they are all the product of infinite holiness, which can do nothing wrong.

3. That they are all directed, as well as contrived, by infinite wisdom, which knows best how to frame matters.—It remains that,

IV. I make some practical improvement, in

1. A use of information. Are the dispensations of providence all right? Then, (1.) If any thing be wrong with us, we may see where the fault lies, not in God, but in ourselves, Job x. The oar he rolls his vessel with is in the waters of affliction, and therefore we think the oar is crooked; but that is our misjudging of God. (2.) That we should justify God in the harshest dispensations, give him the glory, even when we walk on the mountains of darkness. Providence will abide a look of the most piercing impartial eye. But when the eye is infected, it will take up things in their wrong colours.

2. Of comfort to the people of God, whatever providences they meet. Be they never so dark, be they never so little understood by them, yet they are all right and faultless. God does not distribute favours to them by guess, but by measure and weight.

3. Of reproof to those who censure, murmur, and quarrel with the dispensations of providence. This is, (1.) to accuse God of folly, as if he were not wise enough to govern the world that he has made. O how often fall we into this, as if we could have ordered better than providence has done. Murmuring will step up, and correct the escapes of infinite wisdom. (2.) Of injustice, as if he were too hard upon his creatures, that deserve better at his hand. For why would people murmur at their right and due? (3.) Of impotency, as if he could not take away our crosses as easily as he brings them on, or could not make them work for our good.

Lastly, Of exhortation. Let all of us, especially the Lord's people, be exhorted to submit and stoop to sovereignty, be our lot in the world what it will. There is none want their own crosses. Every one has some burden or another to bear; and if we would in truth come after Christ, we are enjoined "to take up our cross, and follow him."

FEAR AND HOPE, OBJECTS OF THE DIVINE COMPLACENCY.*

SERMON VII.

PSALM cxlvii. 11,

The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

THERE are times of danger in which the event is very doubtful, but even then the safety and success will always be on the side the Lord casts them. In consequence, it is an important question, How may we engage him on our side? Certain it is, his pleasure lies not in created strength. Horse and foot, courage and strength, may be on the side which God will disown, and which shall be worsted: "By strength," says he, "shall no man prevail," 1 Sam. ii. 9. His pleasure is in the strength of grace: "He will keep the feet of his saints;" or, as it is expressed in the text, "The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy."—In which words we have,

1. The character of those whose part the Lord will take in all their trials and troubles, and in all their encounters with their enemies. The first part of their character is, they are fearers of God. They have the awe of his majesty upon their spirits.—The second is that they hope in, or rather for his mercy. They, in a becoming manner, wait and patiently seek for relief from God, and that in the way of mercy through Christ, not for any thing in themselves. —Observe next the mixture of these parts of their character: They do not only fear God but hope in him; for fear without hope will sink into raging despair. They not only hope, but fear, for hope without fear will turn into presumption. These two God hath joined together, let not us put them asunder.

2. The privileges of these persons, whoever may be displeased with them, and however much they may be displeased with themselves, God takes pleasure in them. He accepts their persons, and their services, and he will show himself to be on their side. They shall not hope in vain; however hapless their case be in itself, they shall get a merciful relief in due time.

From these words, observe this

DOCT. The Lord takes pleasure in those, who, whatever case they be in, entertain a holy fear of him, with a kindly hope in his mercy.

* Delivered July 27, 1718.

In discouring which, it is intended,

I. Shortly to describe this holy fear, that in all cases ought to be entertained, with a hope of the Lord's mercy.

II. To describe that kindly hope of his mercy, to be entertained in all cases, along with this holy fear.

III. To shew the necessity of keeping up this holy fear and kindly hope in all cases together in the soul.

IV. To shew what is that pleasure the Lord takes in such.

V. To confirm the doctrine of the text.

VI. To make a practical improvement of the different parts of the subject.

I am, then,

I. Shortly to describe this holy fear, that in all cases ought to be entertained, with a hope of the Lord's mercy. This fear of God is,

1. An awe and dread of his majesty and transcendent greatness: Psalm lxxxix. 6, 7, "For who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened to the Lord? God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be held in reverence of all them that are about him." With this the lightness and vanity of the heart is to be repressed. The soul must entertain high and honourable thoughts of God, as a sovereign of independent being, in whom all perfections do concentre, must look up to the clouds, and behold him on his throne in heaven, and so bring itself thereby to a profound reverence of his greatness.

2. A reverence of his absolute, his unlimited authority and power: "Fear him," said Jesus, "who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him," Luke xii. 5; he can command us whatsoever he will, and dispose of us as he pleaseth. Let us have a reverential regard to the uncontrolable sceptre he sways over all creatures. Since he doth in heaven and in earth what seemeth good unto him, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What dost thou? we should silently submit to his disposals.

3. A fear of offending him in any thing: Psalm iv. 4, "Stand in awe, and sin not." This is a fear, and caution, and circumspection, which we should always carry about and never lay aside. We walk amidst many snares; Satan and a corrupt heart are ready to entangle us; but God cannot away with sin; it is the only offence we can give him. He is well pleased to see us afraid of offending him, to see the poor sinner affrighted at every thing that is provoking to him, and keeping up a holy tenderness this way.

4. A fear of imputing iniquity to him, or harbouring hard and unbecoming thoughts of his majesty, Job i. 22, "In all this Job

sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." The proud heart casting off the fear of God, arraigns and condemns the conduct of holy Providence as rigorous and unrighteous; and so murmers against the Lord. But holy fear silenceth the mutiny of these unruly passions, and says, "He does all things well, is holy and righteous in all his ways and works."

5. A dread of going out of his way for help, however hard the case be: Isa. viii. 13, 14, "Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread; and he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence, to both the houses of Israel; for a gin and for a snare, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be taken." Holy fear takes off the wheels of the chariot of impatience and unsanctified haste, which drives furiously to get out of that case in which infinite wisdom has placed us. The soul dare not adventure to shake off the yoke, till the Lord put to his own hand and take it off.

Lastly, A dread of his holy hand in his judgments: Amos iii. 8, "The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophecy?" This fear keeps the heart from slight thoughts of them, and furnishes awful thoughts of a smiting God, the weight of whose hand no man is able to bear. And there is here a dread of the hand of the Lord lying on their person for the past: Heb. xii. 5, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him." The man noticeth the stroke, and what impressions of anger are engraven on it, and so he putteth his mouth in the dust, if so there may be hope, Lam. iii. 29. Whatever he meets with, he takes it as from the Lord, and reverenceth the hand that smiteth.—There is, (2.) A dread of what the Lord may inflict upon him: Psalm cxix. 120, "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments." The fearer of the Lord sees, that whatever be his stroke, it is less than his deserving. They say as Ezra, chap. ix. 13, "Thou, our God, has punished less than our iniquities deserve;" and therefore submit themselves, lest the Lord make the stroke greater, and punish us seven times more.—Let us now,

II. Describe that kindly hope of his mercy, to be entertained in all cases along with this holy fear. It is,

1. A firm persuasion of the good, gracious, and bountiful nature of God, who delights not in the misery of his creatures; Psalm xxv. 8, "Good and upright is the Lord, therefore will he teach sinners in the way." Ezek. xviii. 23, "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God; and not that he should re-

turn from his ways and live?" God is the fountain of all goodness to be found in man or angel, and so is himself a boundless ocean of goodness. He loves to have poor sinners entertaining these kindly thoughts of him. And well may they do so, even under hard pressures, for God lays not on man more than is meet or right, Job xxxiv. 23; and even this he does with a kind of holy reluctance, for "he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men," Lam. iii. 33.

2. A hope of mercy to all their unrighteousness, through Christ. This is the great hope, called the hope of the gospel, Col. i. 23. For it is the main hope purchased by Christ to lost sons of Adam, and held forth to them in the gospel, Heb. viii. 12, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." To cast away this hope, is at once to throw dishonour on the mercy of the Father, and the blood of the Son, and the efficacy of his Spirit; to cast it away, is to please Satan, and to ruin our own souls.

3. A hope of good by their afflictions, trials, and troubles: Rom. viii. 28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." It is the Lord's ordinary way to bring his people nearer him by afflictions: "Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept thy word," Psalm cxix. 67; yea, by this way, also, does he bring in those that are strangers to him, Hosea v. 15, "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence and seek my face; in their afflictions they will seek me early." When the Lord will not use a rod upon a person, that is a terrible sign; but there is always hope when the Lord is at pains with a rod; and to hope for this good, is the way to advance it.

4. A hope of support and protection under their afflictions: Heb. xiii. 5, 6, "He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee; so that we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." The Lord can carry persons through deep waters, and yet keep them from sinking, for he is the lifter up of the head. However high the waters swell, they are still under the check of him whom the winds and the seas obey. The everlasting arms underneath, though not seen in the time, secure the sinner from sinking to the ground, and bring him safe ashore. Now, faith and hope is the way to bring in that support.

5. A hope of seasonable relief, on having such deliverance in due time, as shall be best for God's honour and their good: Psalm xlii. 5, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul! and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for

the help of his countenance." The Lord has many ways of giving relief from trouble. Sometimes he makes the storm blow off, and restores a calm; sometimes he hides them in the grave, and gives them a blessed exchange, for an afflicted life in this world, a joyful happy life in another world. It becomes us to hope for his mercy, in whatever way he may send it: Heb. x. 35, "Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward."

6. A hope of eternal life in a better world: 1 Pet. i. 13, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, (for what?) for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." These hopes will never please God that are confined to the things of this world. He has provided and offers better things to poor sinners; there is a hope laid up for us in heaven, Col. i. 5. While that hope remains firm and well grounded, happy is the soul, whatever be its case; and since he offers it, and makes it over to whosoever will embrace Christ, that hope should never be cast away while we are here.

7. A waiting for the mercy needed and desired: Psalm xxvii. 14, "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord." The hoping soul will wait for God, and bear till his time come, however long it may seem to be. He hath the times and seasons in his own hand. He knows what is the fittest time for giving a mercy, and we must leave it in his own hand, and wait on him: "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord: behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience, till he receive the former and the latter rain; be ye also patient, stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

Lastly, All this hope is to be grounded only on the free grace of God through Jesus Christ, and the precious promises of the word, held forth to us in him, 1 Pet. i. 13, quoted already. Therefore it is called hope for his mercy: "Remember thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." Psalm cxix. 49. If hope be founded on any work or merit in ourselves, or be not bounded by the promise, that is to say, if we hope for what God has not promised, then it cannot be pleasing to him; so that his hope follows faith's embracing Christ in the gospel, and resigning the soul to the Lord; which being done, hope goes and stands upon the watch-tower, to behold and wait for all promised good things coming with Christ from God in due time to the soul.—We now proceed,

III. To shew the necessity of keeping up this holy fear and kindly hope together in all cases.—They are necessary to keep an even bal-

ance in the soul at all times, ready to fall either to the one hand or the other. God's voice to us, is, Isa. xxx. 21, "This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." But, O! how apt are we to go off the road, especially if we are obliged to traverse the mountains of darkness and affliction, of desertion and temptation. But this fear and hope will hedge us on every hand, that we turn not to the right hand or to the left; whereas, if either be wanting, there is a wide gape, at which we will readily fall into the mire.—But more particularly,

1. They keep the soul from splittting on rocks on both hands. We are in this world as on a sea, therefore had need to take care. The way we pass is beset with two dangerous rocks; one on the left, despair, where thousands split; another on the right, presumption, where ten thousands have been shipwrecked; some fall on them in a dead calm, they are fearless and careless, and ere they are aware they dash on the rock of presumption, and go to the bottom; Job xxi. 13, "They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave." To others a storm arises, they are tossed, grow hopeless, and then split on the rock of despair. Whereas holy fear would carry us safe by the one, and kindly hope by the other, whatever storms blow: "Which hope," says Paul, "we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the vail," Heb. vi. 19.

2. They keep the heart in a due mean between carnal security and torturing anxiety. Holy fear keeps men awake, while fearless souls are sleeping within the sea-mark of wrath, not knowing when a wave may come and sweep them away. They may be saying, like the rich man, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine rest; eat, drink, and be merry. But God may then say, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee," Luke xii. 19, 20. Kindly hope composes the heart, and calms the disturbed spirit, while others destitute of it are tormenting themselves. Fear keeps from soaring too high, hope from sinking too low.

3. They keep notably to the duty of praying, which is necessary in all cases, and is a messenger often to be sent to heaven, especially in times of trouble: Psalm l. 15, "And call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Fear stirs up to the duty, hope draws to it. Fear fills the soul with reverence for God, and makes it to be in deep earnest in its addresses; hope guards it against terror and confusion in its applications to the throne. Fear caries off presumptuous confidence; but hope makes it hang upon mercy and grace.

4. They help on patience and resignation to the will of God, without which no man is master of himself: Luke xxi. 19, "In your your patience possess your souls." Hope looks for better things, a calm after a storm; fear tells us, such a stroke, ill carried, may bring on a worse. Thus the soul is in a holy manner both flattered and frightened into contentment with its lot. Thus it is kept from despising the chastening of the Lord, which many do, with their natural courage, and from fainting under his rebukes, as weak-hearted ones are liable to.

Lastly, They arm us on every hand against our adversary the devil: James iv. 7, "Submit yourselves therefore to God; resist the devil, and he will flee from you." There are two things, one of which the devil drives at continually: Either, (1.) To go forward with all ease in the way of sin; for, says the liar, there is no hazard; and thus whole shoals of sinners go on to the pit. But the fear of God will repel this temptation. Or, (2.) Not to offer to return to God, or go to Christ; for, says the murderer, there is no hope. But the kindly hope repels this. By this last he attacks the awakened sinner, and by the former the secure one. Whatever be your case, then, get your souls possessed of this kindly hope and holy fear. Beware of quitting either hope or fear. Are you at ease, and your hope great? O balance it with fear, lest having too much sail without ballast, ye suddenly be overcast and overwhelmed. Are you in trouble, and your fears great? O buoy up your souls with hope, lest ye sink altogether. For motives, consider,

1. The want of any of them makes you a prey to your grand enemy, 1 Peter v. 8, "Be sober, be vigilant, for your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist stedfast in the faith." Whichever of the avenues of the soul stand open, the enemy will enter by it; and once he get in, you know not what havoc he may make there. Are you fearless? he will have his snares fitted for that case. Are you hopeless? be sure he will take his advantage of it.

2. The safety of the soul in this sinful and ensnaring world depends on your entertaining both. The mariner may easier sail the ocean without his compass, the blind man go over his heights and depths without his guide, than you go through this world without these; for the worst that can befal them is the death of the body, but your souls will be ruined.

Lastly, The want of either is highly dishonourable to God. Is there a God in heaven, and will you not fear him? Has his Son died to purchase hope to sinners? and has he declared in his word, that he would have you hope in and for his mercy, and will ye not

do it? Mal. i. 6, "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts." By the want of fear, you declare you value greatness; and by the want of hope, that you can put no trust in his word.—I come now,

IV. To shew what is that pleasure which the Lord takes in such.

1. He approves them in so doing. The Lord says, Thou didst well that it was in thine heart, though Satan may suggest it to be presumption, Psalm cxv. 11, "Ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord; he is their help and their shield." What God requires to be done, he will surely approve of when it is done, this he requires, and therefore will approve of it.

2. He accepts of them; he is well pleased with the persons that do so. The exercise of these graces is a piece of very acceptable service to God, which he takes off sinners' hands for Christ's sake, though it be attended with many imperfections. That unbelief which remains in the hearts of them that fear God, makes them suspect they will be very unwelcome to hope for good at the Lord's hand; but it is a mistake, for such exercise is very pleasing to the Lord.

3. The Lord delights in them that do so. Their name may be Hephzibah, for the Lord delighteth in them, as a father does in his child, who both fears him, and hopes for good at his hand.

(1.) The Lord delights in their persons. Jer. xxxi. 20, "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still, therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." They are accepted in the beloved; their fear carrying them to Christ, and their hope fixing them upon him as the storehouse of all blessings. Being covered with imputed righteousness, they are all fair and lovely in the eyes of the Lord, there is no spot in them, Song iv. 7.

(2.) He delights in their graces. Song iv. 16, "Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." Holy fear and hope are the fruits of his own Spirit in the souls of his people, that grow up there as in a garden, being watered with the dew of heaven. They are leading graces, which bring along with them a train of others, all tending to promote holiness in heart and life.

(3.) In their duties. Prov. xv. 8, "The prayer of the upright is his delight." Where the fear of the Lord has place, the duties of religion will get room; the soul will be afraid of neglecting to pay its due homage unto the Lord; and hope being joined thereto, will bring them to the Lord with expectation of good at his hand; and this is the Lord's delight.

(4.) In their company. Song v. 1, "I have come into my garden, my sister, my spouse." He loves to have them near him, hanging about his hand, conversing with him, receiving his word from his mouth, and making their requests known to him: Song ii. 14, "Let me see (says he) thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." The mighty God, who has his higher house in heaven, has the contrite spirit for his lower house.—I shall now proceed,

V. To confirm the doctrine of the text, or shew, that "the Lord taketh pleasure in those, whatever case they be in, who entertain a holy fear of him, with a kindly hope in his mercy,"—For this purpose, consider,

1. This is answerable and agreeable to the revelation of God's mind in his word, what he has made known of himself both in the law and in the gospel. The fear of God is the great purpose of the law, hope for his mercy through Christ is the great purpose of the gospel. The law was given in such an awful manner, as might fill sinners with the dread of the great Lawgiver; the gospel brings in the blessed hope to lost sinners, so that this fear and hope, answering the design of both, cannot miss of being very pleasing to God.

2. It glorifies God in his glorious perfections, discovered to us in the face of Jesus Christ. The great end of the gospel contrivance is, to shew the glory of God in Christ as in a glass: 2 Cor. iv. 6, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Now, the entertaining of these two, fear and hope, doth at once give him the glory of all these. Holy fear gives him the glory of his awful majesty, inflexible justice, infinite power and holiness; kindly hope gives him the glory of his free grace, mercy, love, and goodness: and the joining of these two together gives him the glory of his infinite wisdom, that hath found out the way to give vent to both in the sinners' case.

3. It is agreeable to the Spirit's work of grace on the soul, whereby the sinner is first cast down, and then lifted up. The Spirit of God coming to the elect soul, finds it secure, careless, and presumptuous, thinking itself "rich and increased in goods, and standing in need of nothing," Rev. iii. 17. The Spirit then discovers what a God, and what a law, the sinner has to do with, and so works this holy fear in the heart. When the soul is awakened, it is ready to despond; and the Spirit, by the doctrines of the gospel, works this hope. Thus the sinner comes and cleaves to Christ.

Lastly, The Lord is very gracious unto such. They are entertained with some off-fallings while they hang about his hand in the

ordinances and duties of religion: Psalm lxv. 4, "We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple." Yea, they are filled as with marrow and fatness; God makes known his secrets to them, even the secrets of his covenant: Psalm xxv. 14, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant." He shews them also the secrets of his word: Luke xxiv. 32, "And they said one to another, Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" Also the secrets of his works, and the dispensations of his providence. And at length they shall be admitted to the full fruition of him in a better world; they shall enter into the joy of their Lord, and be for ever with him.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

SERMON VIII.

PSALM cxlvii. 11,

The Lord taketh pleasure in those that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

HAVING, in the preceding discourse, briefly gone through the doctrinal part, it only remains, that, in the

VI. And last place, I make a practical improvement of the whole; in doing which, I propose to enlarge at considerable length, by adverting to the different parts of this subject.—I begin,

I. With an use of information. It informs us,

1. That God in Christ is full of good-will to poor sinners. Since he will have them thus to depend upon him as children on a father, fearing and hoping in him; he it is who will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth, 1 Tim. ii. 4. Is not this a plain proof that he hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth? Eccl. xviii. 13, and that their ruin is of themselves, if they should perish; that he does not cast them off that hang by him, nor cast them out that come unto him, John vi. 37.

2. That however prosperous and favourable our case be, we have ground to keep up a holy fear upon our spirits: "Happy is the man that feareth alway," Prov. xxviii. 14. Whether it be that our outward state in the world, or our spiritual state, be peaceful, easy, and prosperous, still there is ground to fear, for we are in hazard of offending God in it. There is no way so plain and even, but

we may stumble in it. Outward prosperity ruins many: "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them," Prov. i. 31. And even in a prosperous state of the soul, there is no safety in being secure and careless, for in the managing of that we are apt to offend: 2 Cor. xii. 7, "Lest I should be exalted above measure, through the abundance of the revelations, there was given unto me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." No paradise on the earth but the serpent may be found there; and if one were wrapt up to the third heavens, like Paul, they will bring back with them a corrupt heart, ready to give them a slip, or lead them astray. We are in danger of a heavy turn and sad change in our condition, we are "to serve God with fear, and rejoice with trembling," Psalm ii. 11. See how quickly David's prosperity was changed: Psalm xxx. 7, "Thou didst hide thy face and I was troubled." Job's condition, both temporal and spiritual, how suddenly was it changed? Sovereignty lifts up and casts down, and the anger of a jealous God may soon be stirred, so as to make a mighty overturn in one's condition; therefore we should not be "high-minded, but fear," Rom. xi. 20.

3. It informs us, that however low one's case be, there is still room for hope while here; therefore we should always entertain a kindly hope: Psalm xliii. 5, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? why art thou disquieted in me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance, and my God." One may yet be at his wits end with his difficulties, knowing of no outgate, but yet he may have ground of faith and hope, because—so great things have been done by our merciful God, as to raise us up. He made a world out of nothing, he has raised the dead, and particularly Christ, while the whole elect's sins lay as a grave-stone on him. What, then, hinders him to do a great work for us, when he has done a greater? In him we may trust that he will yet deliver us, 2 Cor. i. 10—Whatever our case be, we are not the first that have been in it, and delivered too in God's own way. Psalm xxii. 4, "Our fathers trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them." People are apt to say, Never one was in such case as theirs. But, "is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time which was before us," Eccl. i. 10; and suppose it were new, yet faith and hope in God are not in vain; for he has a new cure for a new case, Isa. xliii. 18, 19. Whatever our case be, can it be worse than a lost case? Luke xix. 10, "The Son of man came to seek and save that which is lost." Can it be worse than a self-destroying case? Hos. xiii. 9, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help." Can it be worse than a case in

itself quite hopeless, even as dry bones? Ezek. xxxvii. 11, 12, but even by the Spirit of the Lord these bones can be made alive.—It is not beyond the reach of the power of God. Gen. xviii. 14, "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" who can be so low, as that the everlasting arms cannot raise up? with God nothing is impossible. A word from heaven can make all things take a happy turn, for saying and doing are but one thing with God. God says to the sinner, Believest thou that I can do these things? If thou dost, there is a ground of kindly hope.—In a word, the covenant of promise reaches to, and includes mercy of all kinds, necessary to make us happy; so that we have not only God's power, but his will, to give us mercy in all cases held out to us in the word, if so be we will take his way of faith and hope.—From this subject there is,

II. An use of exhortation, in several branches.

1. Fear the Lord; get and entertain a holy fear of God in your spirits. The profane and licentious lives of some, the carnal and loose hearts of others, proclaim a general want of this, Psalm xxxvi. 1, "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes." But all fear of God is not a holy fear pleasing to God. There is a servile fear, and a filial fear. Not to the former, but to the latter, I exhort you.

Herewith some various difficulties and inquiries may arise, which we shall endeavour to answer, such as,

1. When is the fear of God only slavish? In answer to this take the following observations: The fear of God is only slavish,

(1.) When it ariseth only from the consideration of God's wrath as a just judge. This fear of God is to be found in the unconverted; they have the spirit of bondage again to fear, Rom. viii. 15; yea, in the devils, they believe and tremble, Jam. ii. 19; and if the conscience once be awakened, though the heart be not sanctified, this fear cannot miss to take place. It is a natural passion flowing from self-love and a sight of danger, which is so much the more vehement, in proportion as the danger apprehended is greater or smaller: nearer or more distant. One under this fear, fears God as the slave fears his master, because of the whip, which he is afraid of being lashed; he abstains from sin, not out of hatred of it, but because of the wrath of God annexed to it. An apprehension of God's heavy hand on him here, or of hell and damnation hereafter, is the predominant motive of his fear of God, whom he fears only as an incensed Judge, and his powerful enemy.

(2.) When it checks or kills the love of God. There is a fear opposite to the love of God, which by this very character is discovered to be base and servile: 1 John iv. 18, "There is no fear in

love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment." There is a necessary connection betwixt true fear and love, the one cannot be without the other; they are both links of the same chain of grace, which the Holy Spirit gives those whom he sanctifies; but slavish fear fills the heart with hard thoughts of God, and the more it prevails, the farther is the soul from the love of God.

(3.) When it drives the sinner away from God. Under its influence, Adam and Eve hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God, and Cain went out from his presence. All the graces of the Spirit, as they come from the Lord, so they carry the sinner back to him; so no doubt it is an ungracious fear of God that frights the sinner away from him; for they that seek and return to him, will fear him and his righteousness. This fear hath this effect in different degrees, and the higher the worse:—It takes heart and hand from persons in their approaches to God, 1 John iv. 18, quoted already; it kills them before the Lord, knocks all confidence and hope in God on the head, so that their hearts at duty are like Nabal's—dying within them, and become as a stone; so when they should run for their life, it cuts the sinews of their endeavours; when they would wrestle for the blessing, it makes their knees feeble, and their hands hang down.—It makes them first averse to duty, and then give up with it; they deal with God as one with his avowed enemy, into whose presence he will not come, Gen. iii. 8. The people of God have sometimes had a touch of this, 2 Sam. vi. 9, "And David was afraid of the Lord that day, and said, How shall the ark of the Lord come unto me? Though it never prevails with them to extinguish love, yet sometimes a believer is like a faulty child, who, instead of humbling himself before his parents, hides himself in some corner, and is so frighted, that he dare not come in, and look the parent in the face; but this is a most dangerous case, especially if it lasts long.—In a word, it makes them run to physicians of no value. For what is more natural than that men who are frightened from God under apprehended danger, run to some other quarter, and that to their own ruin, Rev. vi. 16, "And said to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb."

2. What is to be thought of this slavish fear of God? To this I answer, there is something good in it, and something evil.

(1.) There is something good in it, namely, the fear of God's wrath for sin, which lies unpardoned on the guilty sinner or which the sinner may be inclined to commit: Jam. ii. 19, "Thou believest that there is one God, thou dost well." To cast off fear of the wrath of God, and the terrible punishments which he has annexed to sin, is a pitch of wickedness which but the very worst of

men arrive at. The fear of God's wrath against sin, and that duly influential too, is recommended to us by Christ himself, Luke xii. 5, "Fear him," says he, "which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell, yea, I say unto you, Fear him." It is also recommended by the example of the very best of saints, Job xxxi. 23, "For destruction from God was a terror unto me;" and says David, "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments," Psalm cxix. 120. And the law of God is not fenced with terrors to be disregarded, but to awe men's spirits. But,

(2.) There is something evil in it, yea, much evil in it, if we consider,—The scrimpness and narrowness of its spring. Why should the fear of God be confined to spring up from his wrath against sin only or chiefly, since there are so many other perfections of God, which may give rise to the fear of him, which are disregarded by this means? It casts a vail of disrespect on his holiness, goodness, and hatred of sin, on his relations of Creator, Preserver, Father, Supreme Lord, and Governor of the world.—The horrible effects and tendency thereof, as it rises only from this spring, and overflows all the banks of godly fear. Fear of God, even of his wrath, is good, but the excess of it is very bad. Fire and water are both good and necessary, but very bad when the one burns man, and the other drowns him. Hence, since what is acceptable in the sight of God is perfect in parts, though not in degrees, is good in the manner as well as matter, this fear is not what he takes pleasure in, nay, it is displeasing to him, and is the sin of those who hear the gospel, whose fear ought to be extended according to the revelation made to them. And thus one may be displeasing to himself, to those about him, and to God also; and if they attain to no other fear of God, what they fear will probably come upon them. Nevertheless, this fear, kept within bounds, may, by the Spirit, be made the means to bring the sinner to the Lord in his covenant. For the fear of God's wrath is a good thing in itself, Rom. viii. 15; it serves to rouse the sinner out of his security, to make him sensible of his danger, and to seek for relief: Psalm ix. 20, "Put them in fear, O Lord, that the nations may know themselves to be but men." And therefore the law and its threatening, as a red flag, are displayed in the sight of secure sinners, that they may be roused to flee from the wrath to come.

To this there may be offered this objection, The fear of the Lord's wrath can make but an unsound closing with the Lord in his covenant. Answ. That is very true, if there be nothing more. But fear of God's wrath not only may, but ordinarily, if not always does, begin the work which love crowns. Fear brings men to the gates of the city of refuge, and when they are there, love is kindled, and

makes them press forward. Fear brings the poor captive woman to confer with the conqueror about the match; but thereby love is kindled, and faith makes the match. It works, however, very differently at other times; for Satan and our corrupt hearts are ready to drive forward this fear of God's wrath to exceed all bounds; and no wonder, for when it has got over the boundaries, it makes fearful havoc in the soul's case, like a consuming fire, deadening all good motions towards God, and quickening evil ones, to the dishonour of God, and one's own torment; and no case out of hell is liker hell than this, both in respect of sin and misery. But when the Spirit of God has a saving work in view, he can easily make the spirit of bondage subservient to the spirit of adoption.

3. How should one manage in the case of a slavish fear of God's wrath? Here I answer, We had need to be well guided, for the losing or winning of the soul depends upon it. For your assistance I offer the following directions:—

(1.) Labour to clear the grounds of your fear of God's wrath, by a rational inquiry and discovery. There are, even of these fears, some that do really proceed from a bodily distemper vitiating the imagination, namely, from melancholy, and the like; and in this case, your trouble rises and falls according to the disposition of your bodies, but not according to the comfort or terror you receive from God's word, as it is in truly spiritual troubles. Thus it often comes on, and goes off, they know not how; shewing the first wound to be in their head, not in their conscience. Of this sort was the evil spirit Saul was troubled with, under which he got ease by music, not by his Bible. In this case, as well as others, it would be of use to consider the real grounds of fear from the Lord's word, and the consideration of one's own state or case, and so to turn it as much as may be into solid fears upon plain and evident reasons for it. This would be a step to the salvation of the soul. But, alas! it is sad to think of tormenting fear kept up on we know not what grounds, and which can produce no good; while in the meantime people will not be at pains to enquire into the real evidences of their soul's hazard, the sinfulness of their state, heart, and life. Ask, then, yourselves, what real ground there is from the Lord's word for this fear of yours.

(2.) Beware of casting off the fear, dread, and awe of the wrath of God against sin: Job xv. 4, "Yea, thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God." This is the issue of some people's fears, who, one way or other, get their necks from under the yoke, and grow more stupid, fearless, and profane, than even by the just judgment of God. It is true, that fear is not enough; but there is

something to be added, and yet not this fear cast away. If thou be brought into a state of sonship to God, the dread of God's wrath against sin will come along with you, though it will be no more slavish; as if a slave were made his master's son by adoption, he would still fear his anger, though not slavishly as before. But be one's state what it will, better be God's slave, fearing his wrath only, than the devil's freeman, casting off the fear of God altogether. There is less ill in the former than in the latter. Yea,

(3.) Cast not off the fear of that wrath, even its overtaking you, till such time as thy soul be brought away freely to Jesus Christ: Hos. v. 8, "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence; in their affliction they will seek me early." Thou hast no warrant to cast it off sooner, for certainly wrath is pursuing thee, till thou be within the gates of the city of refuge; and to be without fear of that wrath that is still advancing on a person, is ruining. Indeed, as soon as thou hast sincerely come to Christ in his covenant, though the fear of wrath against sin is never to be laid by, yet then thou mayest and oughtest to cast off the fear of vindictive wrath overtaking thee: "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," Rom. viii 1.

(4.) Look not always on an absolute God, for surely that can produce no fear of God but a slavish one; but look on God in Christ as the trysting-place himself has set, for receiving the addresses of the guilty on a throne of grace: 2 Cor. v. 19, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." This is the way to repress and curb the horrible effects of slavish fear, to make love to God, faith, and hope, spring up in the soul, and so mould that fear of thine into filial fear and reverence. In a God out of Christ thou canst discern nothing but inflexible justice, and the utmost terror; and from his throne of unvailed majesty, hear nothing but terrible voices, thunders, and earthquakes. But in a God in Christ thou mayest behold bowels of mercy, and flowing compassions; and from the throne of grace hear the still small voice of mercy and peace, Isa. xxxv. 3, 4.

(5.) At what time soever you find the fear of God's wrath begin to choke the love of God in your hearts, or to drive you away from him in any way, check and curb that fear resolutely, let it not proceed, though you were in the time under the most atrocious sin: Psalm lxv. 3, "Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou wilt purge them away." For then you are in the march between God's ground and the devil's; and there is a wind from hell, blowing up the fire of fear, that will consume you, if it be not quenched; for the separation of the soul from God, and its

going away from him, can in no case fail to be of a ruining nature: and the more that it increases with a person, his heart will be the more hardened, and he will be set the farther off from repentance.

(6.) Greedily embrace any gleam of hope from the Lord's own word, and hang by it. Ye should do like Benhadad's servants, and say, We have heard that the king of Israel is a merciful king, and we hope he will save us, 1 Kings xx. 31. The apostle calls hope the Christian's head-piece, 1 Thess. v. 8, not to be thrown away in a time of danger.

Lastly, Come away resolutely to the Lord Jesus, lay hold on him in the gospel-offer, and consent to the covenant: Heb. vii. 25, "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." Lay hold on the horns of this our altar, and you shall not die; he will swallow up death in victory, Isa. xxv. 8. Flee into this city of refuge; the avenger shall not overtake thee. Do as the lepers of Samaria did, reasoned with themselves, and went to the camp, where meat was to be found. Thou art like to sink in a sea of wrath, Jesus holds out his hand to draw thee ashore. Thou art afraid, perhaps, it is not to thee, it is vain to try; but know that it is the hand that must take thee out, or thou art a gone man; neglecting to take hold, thou art ruined; otherwise, thou canst be but ruined.

4. When is the fear of the Lord holy, filial, and reverential, such as the Lord takes pleasure in?—For your satisfaction in this inquiry, I would answer,

(1.) When the chief spring of it is not our own harm, but God's infinite excellence and perfection striking an awe upon the soul: Gen. xxviii. 17, "And Jacob was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and the gate of heaven." On this account, God was called the fear of the holy patriarchs, while in the world, Gen. xxxi. 42. Thus ingenuous children fear their parents, not because of the ill they may do them, but because of that authority and superiority they have over them.—When the soul is awed into a profound reverence for God, by the consideration of his transcendent excellence in all things, this is a becoming or true filial fear.

(2.) When the offending of God is feared as the greatest evil. A graceless man may fear the punishment of swearing, but a righteous man feareth an oath, Eccl. ix. 2; the former may fear the threatening as the greatest evil, but the righteous feareth the commandment, and shall be rewarded, Prov. xiii. 13. What would the most of the world fear about sin, if they were secured against wrath? Nothing. But the fearer of God, his great fear would remain notwithstanding, viz. the displeasing of his gracious Father.

(3.) When fear of his wrath is joined with a kindly affection and love to him, Psalm xc. 11—13. No man fears God who has not a dread of his anger, and the more grace, the more of this dread; so that a godly man will fear a frown of his face more than another a stroke of his hand. But withal this does not straiten the heart, but enlarge it in love to him; for these perfections of God that are the most proper objects of fear, are beautiful and lovely in the eyes of a saint; and therefore under the effects of his anger, they condemn themselves and justify God.

Lastly, When the fear of God draws the sinner to God, and makes him cling to him, Hos. iii. 5, "They shall seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days." As if he had said, They shall fear away to the Lord, like a good-natured child under fear of his parent running away to him, and catching hold of him; the language of which is, Any thing but separation from my holy Father. Holy fear also keeps the soul with the Lord, Jer. xxxii. 40, "I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me," and that upon the same principle.

5. How doth this fear work in the gracious soul? To this question I answer, Holy fear is an influential grace, diffusing its influence through the whole man, and therefore all religion is often comprehended under the name of the fear of God.

(1.) It makes God's verdict of things in his holy law the man's complete standard. In matters of faith, it causes him believe that God has said it; in matters of practice, to do or forbear, because God has bid or forbid it, though his own reason and all the world should contradict, Prov. iii. 7, "Be not wise in thine own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil." Holy fear awes the soul into implicit compliance with all that an incomprehensible God makes known in his word. So was Abraham brought to offer his son, and the fear of God carried him over all obstructions, Gen. xxii. 12.

(2.) It awes the soul into abstaining from such sins as there is no other awe-band against. There are some cases of temptation, wherein there is nothing from any creature to marr compliance with it, the way is quite clear on that part. But then the fear of God will be a sufficient restraint. Sometimes thou mayest have a fair occasion to wrong thy neighbour, and there is no fear of his knowing thou didst it; but if thou fearest God, thou darest not for thy soul do it, more than if all the world were looking on thee, Lev. xix. 14, "Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling-block before the blind, but shalt fear thy God, I am the Lord." Sometimes occasions for sin occur, and men will bear thee out in the sin-

ful practice; but if thou fearest God, thou darest not do it, more than if all the world should conspire to hinder thee, Job xxxi. 21—23. Holy Providence lays such occasions before men for their trial.

(3.) It awes the soul into compliance with duties, even such as one has no other thing to drive him to, Eccl. xii. 13, "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." Holy fear reverenceth the authority of God, not only in abstaining from sin, but in complying with duties, Deut. vi. 13, "thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him." Those who have no inward principle to set them on their duty, have no fear of God before their eyes. But that principle will carry a man to duty, over the belly of opposition and contradiction, from Satan, an evil world, and the corrupt reasonings of one's own heart.

(4.) It makes one mainly fear the offence of God in the commission of sin, and omission of duties. The great care of a fearer of God is, lest he depart from God, Jer. xxxii. 40; holy fear and love are always joined, and therefore he that truly fears God, hates sin, and loathes it, because God hates it, Prov. viii. 13, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil." He loves his duty because it is pleasing in the Lord's sight; whereas others hate sin for fear of wrath, and only love duty for the sake of the reward. It suffers not the soul to rest in any degree of holiness already attained, but spurs it on towards perfection: 2 Cor. vii. 1, "Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." As Noah's fear made him not only begin the ark, but advance the work till it was perfected, so this holy fear still works against sin, till the soul be out of hazard; and that is not till death. Truce with sin, or indulging lusts, say either there is no fear of God in the heart, or that it is asleep; for in whatsoever measure one fears God, he will stand at a distance from sin, and seek the destruction of his corruptions.

Lastly, It carries the man to his duty, over the belly of the fear of man or any other creature, Matth. x. 28, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul." If one be in hazard of being frightened from his duty, by the fear either of devils or of men, there is no antidote like the fear of God, 1 Pet. iii. 14, "But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be ye troubled;" for as the light of the sun removes the light of a glow-worm, that shines only in the dark, so the fear of God banisheth other fear in the point of duty to the Lord.

I shall now add a few motives to influence the study of this filial fear; such as,

1. Infinite greatness and goodness meet together in him, and in him only, and therefore it is his due, Jer. x. 7, "Who would not fear thee, O king of nations, for to thee doth it appertain." His glorious and unspeakable perfections entitle him to it, and it cannot be denied him without the highest sacrilege. Nay, men must needs be strangers to him who do not fear him; for no sooner does the creature know him, but it must fear him; the sight of his greatness without his goodness, will produce a terror: but the sight of both, a holy reverence.

2. The relations requiring reverence of us meet together in him; and the truth is, we owe no reverence to any, but as they do in some sort, by the eminence they stand in, represent God whom we are to fear above all, and to fear in them. A reverential fear is due to our superiors, but God is the Supreme Being. We owe it to those who are superior to us in office and dignity, Rom. xiii. 7, "Render therefore unto all their due, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour." God is the supreme Governor of the world. Is the servant to reverence his master, the child his parents, the wife her husband? surely then God, who is the ancient of days, who stands to his people in such endearing relations, is to be feared by them, Psalm xlv. 11, "He is thy Lord, and worship thou him."

3. It is our wisdom to fear God, Psalm cxi. 10, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." O sinner! wouldst thou be wise indeed? then fear God; it is the beginning of wisdom. A man never begins to be wise till the fear of God enters his heart. He goes on in folly and madness till he get this ballast to his soul; he is frisking about the pit's mouth, in hazard every moment of falling down, till the awe of God strikes his soul.—It is the chief point of wisdom; all the wisdom of the world is but folly in comparison of this. Wisdom teaches men to fear dangers, losses, and the like, but what avails it all, if men fear not the offending of God, and the loss of the soul.

4. It is in some sort the whole of religion, Job iv. 6, "Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways?" for it is the sum and substance of religious duties, which therefore are comprehended under that name in many parts of the Bible, and it has an universal influence over the whole of religion, drawing it all after it in the special parts thereof: for when it once gets place, it will bring in every known duty, and set the soul at a distance from all known sin.

5. It would free you of other fears that are tormenting, in whatever degree it gets place in your hearts. Fear of men and devils

is so entertained by many, that it becomes a tormenting passion, frighting them out of the way of duty to God. This is the first expedient to get rid of these. Allow the great God his own room in the heart, and let him be thy fear and thy dread, and so the creature will prove contemptible in comparison of him.

6. Consider the precious promises made to, and the benefits bestowed on those that fear the Lord. If thou be a fearer of God, go matters as they will, with thee it shall be well; Eccl. viii. 12, 13, "Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days are prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him; but it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, because he feareth not before God," It prolongs men's days, in so far as it keeps them in the way of holiness, Prov. x. 27; see a cluster of promises, Psalm xxv. 12—14; compare Prov. xix. 23, and Psalm xxxiv. 9, which you may read at your leisure.

Lastly, The want of the fear of God is an infallible sign of a wicked, graceless heart; it looses the reins to wickedness of heart and life, and so betrays men into ruin, Psalm xxxvi. 1—4, "These that fear not God now, will be made to fear him hereafter, when there shall be no escaping out of the hand of their terrible Judge.

Some may say, O! how shall I attain to this holy fear of God? With a view to promote this attainment, I would offer the following directions:—

1. Labour to know God, who and what he is, 1 Kings viii. 43, "That all people of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee, as do thy people Israel." It is a benefit of the second covenant, to know the Lord, Hos. ii. 20, "I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord." God, to the most of the world, is like a prince in disguise amongst his subjects, they treat him rudely because they do not know him; an unknown God will not be feared. While ignorance of God reigns in the heart, there is no place for holy fear; for that will make men count darts as stubble, and laugh at the shaking of the spear.

2. Stir up in your hearts a desire to fear him; it is a token for good, when one is willing to entertain the fear of God, Neh. i. 11, "Thy servants who desire to fear thee." This desire hath the promise, and it will be accompanied with suitable endeavours after it. Many fight against the fear of God, that they may live at ease, and may be able to give themselves loose reins to their sinful practices; no wonder their hearts be hardened from it. And hence, if at any time they be taken with the fear of God, they do what they can to be freed of it, as they would pluck out arrows out of their flesh.

3. Take God for your God in Christ, and devote yourselves to him. The God we choose for our God, we will fear; Mic. iv. 5, "For all people will walk every one in the name of his God, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever." And so, when men set up their idols of jealousy in the Lord's room, these get the fear that is due to God. So the worldling fears his clay god, his life is in its smiles, and its frowns are his death. But take the Lord for your God, I say, in Christ; for no otherwise he offers himself to us in the covenant, 2 Cor. v. 19. This is the way to holy fear: For, (1.) It is a promised benefit of the covenant, Jer. xxxii. 40, "I will put my fear in their hearts." Whoever comes into God's covenant of grace, the fear of God is, by the holy Spirit, stamped upon their hearts, whereby it may be known that they belong to God as children; and they devote themselves, on the other hand, to his fear, Psalm cxix. 38. They are his servants, devoted to his fear. They give themselves to it, and make it their great study. (2.) This covenant is a covenant of peace and friendship betwixt God and the guilty creature, through a Mediator, Heb. xii. 22—24, so that thy state is changed, the moment that thou comest into the covenant, from enmity to peace with God, Eph. ii. 19, they become fellow-citizens with the saints, and are of the household of God. This happily joins love and dread of God together, producing holy fear and reverence of God; whereas while God is apprehended certainly as an enemy to us, fear him we may with slavish fear, but not with holy fear, since we cannot love him.

4. Be much in the exercise of repentance. Sorrowing after a godly sort for sin, as it dishonours God, is offensive to his majesty, separates the sinner from God, and exposes the soul to his anger, is the ready way to produce holy fear for the time to come, 2 Cor. vii. 11. Yea, what fear, says Paul, namely as the effect of sorrow after a godly sort; they that are burnt dread the fire; and they that feel the bitterness of sin, will fear God, and stand at a distance from it. The looking into our frightful acts of sin, will awe our hearts with a dread of the offended Majesty, and make us fall down, saying, "Forgive us our debts."

5. Pray for it earnestly as a promised benefit of the covenant, and join thereto a faith of particular confidence: Matth. xxi. 22, "And all things whatsoever ye shall ask, believing ye shall receive them." Beg of God that he would manifest himself to you, so as ye may be filled with holy fear of him. Ye may read and hear much of God, and little impressions be made on your spirits by it at all; but when the Lord discovers himself to the sinner, his own glorious light will so represent him as the soul cannot choose but

both love and fear him: Job xlii. 5, 6, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee: Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

Lastly, Draw together the scattered affections and faculties of the soul, and set them on the Lord: Psalm lxxxvi. 11, "Unite my heart to fear thy name." As the scattered rays of the sun will not burn, till they be collected by a burning glass; so the heart, walking at random, will not be filled with holy fear. Withdraw your hearts from pursuing vanities, and gadding after idols, and labour to see the Lord in those glasses where we may perceive how he is to be feared.

I would urge you to look to him particularly, (1.) In the glass of his word. See how he is there represented as one worthy to be feared: Psalm lxxxix. 7, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." O with what awful solemnity may we hear him there speaking of himself, his saints speaking of him and to him! and the angels also, with their vailed faces, crying, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. Had we eyes to discern his voice in his word, every page would fill our hearts with profoundest reverence. See him, (1.) In the shining holiness of his commandments, perfectly pure from all earthly dross; and when thus seen, how can the sinful creature not fear him! Exod. xv. 11, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" He appears there to be all light, and that in him there is no darkness at all. The holy, spiritual, and extensive law, may fill our hearts with the dread of the Lawgiver, of whose nature it is a transcript. See him, (2,) In the amazing sovereignty of his threatenings. This filled good Josiah with fear, 2 Kings xxii. 19; and Hab. iii. 16. Behold thence flames of wrath flashing out on the faces of impenitent sinners. All the threats of men own death to be their utmost; and, O! how will a threat of death fright mortals! But the Lord's threatenings go beyond death, and carry the matter to an endless eternity. See him, (3.) In the unspeakable riches of his gospel-promises displayed in the word. His terrors are no more severe on the one hand, than his promised encouragements are great on the other. If hell be in the one scale, heaven is in the other. Who would not, therefore, fear him?—Look to him,

2. In Christ, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person. See God in Christ, and there see an object of fear and love in one. If ye would be stirred up to fear God, look to Mount Calvary, and there behold Christ groaning, and dying on a

cross for the sins of an elect world, and you will see three awful sights. (1.) The severity of God's justice against sin, not sparing his own Son, Rom. viii. 32. Many terrible instances have there been of this, in the deluge, and the like. But what is the tumbling down of sinful angels into the pit, the deluging of a world, the burning of Sodom,—to the Son of God dying on a cross, and bearing his Father's wrath? O! if this was done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? (2.) The channel of mercy and grace, in which they flow to guilty sinners. It is by the Mediator's stripes we must be healed; the sinner's life comes in the way of Christ's death; no mercy, no grace, but through the wounds of a Redeemer. There was love from eternity in the breast of God towards an elect world, but Justice stood in the way of Mercy's getting through to the criminals; a way was then made by the blood of the Son of God. (3.) The price of pardon, 1 Pet. i. 19, the precious blood of Christ; no pardon, but what is the price of blood, and that blood of infinite value; that is the ransom which had to be given for the captives, or they could never have been set free. O! who can see these, and not fear this awful and tremendous majesty thus appearing!—Look at him,

3. In the glass of his adorable perfections. How small a portion do we know of him! but there is nothing which we have manifested to us concerning him, but may contribute to this holy fear. On the one hand, consider his infinite power, whereby he can do all, and his universal dominion, whereby he may do what he will: Job xxxvii. 23, 24, and xxv. 2; his justice, holiness, omniscience, omnipresence, infinite varacity and truth, whereby all he has said shall be made good to a tittle. Who, then, can but fear him?—Consider, on the other hand, his mercy, his love, grace, and goodness, which are so unbounded and unspeakable! Who, then, can but fear him?—Look at him,

Lastly, In the glass of his works. Look to his works of creation, Psalm xix. 1. Does not the earth and heaven, with all their glorious furniture, cry aloud to us to fear this God. Look to his works of providence: Jer. v. 22, "Fear ye not me? saith the Lord; will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass?" His managing of the world challenges our fearing of him. (1.) His mercies with which we are loaded, call us to reverence him as our great benefactor, Jer. v. 24. (2.) His judgments; his judgments, in particular, against ourselves, Luke xxiii. 40; and against others, which we may every where discern: Psalm cxix. 118.—120, "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments."

Every stroke laid on in this world is fitted to create a fear of him in our hearts. His general judgment, that is to come, the serious view of which must needs strike sinners with fear: 1 Pet. i. 17, "And if ye call on the Father, who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." See also Eccl. xii. 13, 14.

II. I would now earnestly exhort you to "hope in the Lord for his mercy." Entertain a holy hope in God in all cases. For clearing of this, we must know, that hope in general is an inclination to, and expectation of good possible to be had, but not without some difficulty. As hope is conversant about divine things, or the mercy of God, it is of two sorts, holy hope, and presumptuous hope; the one well-grounded, the other ill-grounded. Here, therefore, also, some inquiries may be proposed, which we shall endeavour to answer; such as,

I. What is the true hope for mercy, which the Lord takes pleasure in? ANSW. It is a certain expectation of attaining the mercy, which faith believes, grounded on God's grace and faithfulness.

(1.) For the kind of it; it is an expectation of mercy to be attained. Hope looks always on its object as future: Rom. viii. 24, "For we are saved by hope. But hope that is seen is not hope. for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" This is a main difference between faith and hope, faith looking always on its object as present in the promise, for "faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." And hope is a certain expectation of it, not so much in itself, (for true hope may be attended with much doubting, Lam. iii. 18), as in the event, for it will never fail the party that has it, nor put him to shame by disappointment, for it hangs on faith: Rom. v. 5, "And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost given unto us.

(2.) For the object of this hope; it is mercy which is hoped for. Now, there is a threefold mercy hope looks for. (1.) The mercy of eternal life itself: Jude 21, "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." This is the chief thing the believer is to hope for, and he may, with the utmost certainty and confidence, expect it, 2 Tim. i. 12. This hope, even the hope of salvation, the apostle will have the Christian to put on as an helmet, 1 Thess. v. 8, and even to stretch forth his hope over death and the grave. (2.) The mercy necessary to bring us to eternal life; as perseverance therein to the end, notwithstanding all the difficulties that are in the way: Rom. viii. 38, "And we know, that all things work together for good to them that

love God, and are the called according to his purpose." Though the grace of God in him be like a spark of fire in an ocean, he ought firmly to hope, that the same heavenly breath that kindled it will keep it in to the end. (3.) The mercy of all other good things, so far as God shall see the bestowing them on us for his own glory, and our good. There are many particular things good in themselves, which we know not whether they will be so to us or not; for example, deliverance from such a trouble; therefore it is not to be absolutely hoped for, but under this qualification, that God sees it to be good for us.

(3.) For the antecedent of this hope: that is faith, which is the evidence of things hoped for, Heb. xi. 1. There can be no true hope without faith; where faith does not open the door, hope cannot enter. Faith embraces the mercy in the promise of God, and hope waits for the accomplishment of the promise; so that one cannot truly hope for that which God has not promised, neither can one hope for the accomplishment of that promise which faith does not believe.

Lastly, The ground of this hope is God's free grace in Christ and his faithfulness: 1 Pet. i. 13, "Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, and hope to the end, for the grace which is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." The mercy promised is quite above the sinner's deserving; but he considers the fulness and freedom of God's grace, and withal how unalterable he is to his word, and therefore hopes upon having that word made good to him.

A *second* question is, How may the hope of mercy be known to be presumptuous? Answ. Presumption is the soul-ruining plague, whereby a person assumes to himself what God has, by no testimony of his word, declared to be his, and which alters the beautiful order of mercy established by God, joining together what God has separated, and separated what he has joined.—Upon this I observe,

(1.) That hope is presumptuous, which is not founded on the Lord's word. Such hope is brisk in the dark, but loses all its lustre by the light of God's word brought in upon it: John iii. 20, 21, "For every one that doth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved; but he that doth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." God's word is a friend unto his grace, but an enemy to delusion; it is the touch-stone that discovers the true metal and also the counterfeit. You hope for salvation, in what word of God is your hope founded? Does the Lord's word, searchingly applied, strengthen or weaken your hope? Say you, The general invitations are the ground of my hope? These may be grounds of hope that ye may get eternal life, if you will take God's

way: but do you not hope that you shall get it, without a due consideration of this? Now, these can never be the grounds of a solid hope, for all that hear the gospel are comprehended in these, as well as you.

(2.) That hope is presumptuous, which overlooks and neglects the means appointed by God for the attaining of his mercy unto eternal life: 1 Pet. i. 3, "We are begotten by God to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." The way thou art to be happy for ever is, that thou be united to Christ by a true faith, that thou be a new creature, that thou lead a holy life. Dost thou neglect these, and yet hope all will be well? Thy hope is presumption, and will ruin thee, Deut. xxix. 19, 20.

Lastly, That hope is presumptuous, which is built without erasing the old foundation, Luke xxxiv. 48. Many have hopes of heaven which grow up with themselves, they were never shaken out of themselves, nor had the naughtiness of their hopes discovered, and so never were led to Jesus Christ, to build on him by uniting with him.

A *third* enquiry may be, How may the hope of mercy be known to be true hope, which God will take pleasure in? In answer to this, it may be noticed,

1. True hope is founded on the free grace of God in Christ, 1 Pet. i. 13, quoted already. The scriptures are written for our learning that we, through patience and comfort of them, might have hope, Rom. xv. 4. Hope is not built upon our good dispositions, good works, external and common benefits which we enjoy, for these are but a sandy foundation, unable to bear this weight; but the anchor of hope is cast so as to fix upon the immoveable ground aforesaid, Heb. vi. 19. It is true holiness discerned by us in ourselves, as an evidence, that doth help us to a firm hope; but the stress of hope lies not upon it as a ground-work.

2. True hope is a lively principle of sanctification, 1 John iii. 3, "And every man that hath this hope purifieth himself, even as he (God) is pure;" and therefore it is called a lively hope, 1 Pet. i. 3. As a spring by degrees does work out the mud that is in a well, so hope of mercy does work out corruption; as the prospect of the marriage-day makes the parties to be taken up in preparing for the marriage, so the true hope of eternal life puts one to be preparing for it, Rev. xix. 7. That hope which suffers sin to lie untouched in heart and life, that does not put on a person to mortify sin, is a dead hope; and true hope carries to universal holiness, even as he is pure.

Lastly, It makes one diligent in the use of means appointed by

God, Heb. x. 23—25; but withal not to rest on the means, but on the Lord. To hope, without using the means appointed and required, is presumption; to rest on the means is a spice of atheism. But that is true hope, which makes the soul delight in all duties and ordinances, to leave no appointed means unessayed, in order to attaining the blessed end; and then, when all is done, to place all confidence of success on the Lord.

With a view to press this holy, lively hope, I would mention the following motives.

1. It is not only our comfortable attainment, but a duty required of all that believe, 1 Pet. i. 13, "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end." And therefore the apostle Paul presseth diligence in seeking after it in full measure, Heb. vi. 11, "And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end;" and he prays for it, Rom. xv. 13, "Now, the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." It is a duty that is in a special manner comfortable.

2. It is most necessary; hope is as necessary to a Christian, as a head-piece to a soldier in a battle, 1 Thess. v. 8; as necessary as an anchor to a ship, Heb. vi. 19; yea, so necessary, that we are said to be saved by it, Rom. viii. 24.

Lastly, It is a great friend to holiness, and perseverance in the ways of God, 1 Cor. xv. 58.—As it honours God's grace and goodness, so it strengthens the soul, and animates it to all duties, to fight against corruption and temptation, and to pursue holiness.

III. Let all be exhorted to entertain a holy fear of God, together with a holy hope for his mercy. Mix these, and balance your souls with them, whatever your case be. While you are going through the world, keep your course in the middle between the two rocks of presumption and despair.—For this purpose,

1. Beware of desponding or despairing of the mercy of God in Christ. There is an allowable despair, which all ought to entertain, in order to their getting their hope fixed on God, viz. a quitting of all hope in our own sufficiency, or ability to make ourselves happy by ourselves, or that ever we shall be well, while we continue in a state of black nature. But what we call despair is a giving over all hope in God, which is a horrible sin. There is a threefold despair you should beware of, as ye would not ruin your own souls.

(1.) A sensual despair, which ariseth from an excessive love of the profits and pleasures of this world, with a secure contempt of spiritual and external good in another world, 1 Cor. xv. 32, "Let

us," say they, "eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Alas! how many are there plagued with this? their souls are festered with the desire of present good, which is their all, and, having no hope of better after this life, they give the swing to their lusts after these.

(2.) A sluggish despair, Prov. xxii. 13, "The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets." Their sloth musters up difficulties to them, forming some that are groundless, imaginary ones, and aggravating real ones, so that they conclude beforehand that they will not be better, their endeavours will not succeed, and therefore they lie still, and will do nothing for their own help; this ruins many.

(3.) A sorrowful despair, which ariseth from strong fears, which raise such a mist in the soul, that grounds of hope in its case, are hid out of sight, and they are in their soul's case as in Acts xxvii. 20, neither sun nor stars for many days appear, no small tempest lies on them, and all hope that they shall be saved is then taken away. There are different degrees of this; sometimes it is silent and sullen, making little noise, but is smothered in one's breast like a burning fire. In such a case, one would do well to give it a vent before God, his servants, or godly experienced Christians, lest it ruin them. This is the way David took when in such a case, Psalm xxxix. 2.—4, "I was dumb with silence, I held my peace even from good, and my sorrow was stirred; my heart was hot within me; while I was musing, the fire burned, then spake I with my tongue, Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am." Sometimes it is raging as in Judas, who, under horror laid upon his sin, did miserably end his life.

Beware of all these, and resist the beginnings of despair, and if it has fastened on any soul, let them strive to quench it, as they would do a fire. The former makes way for the latter, and altogether makes way for remediless despair in hell. I shall only say two things of it.—(1.) It is defiling, and makes the soul most loathsome before God; for it conceives most basely and abominably of God and Christ, directly opposing itself to the grand design of the gospel; it blasphemes the power of God, and the efficacy of his Son's blood and Spirit. (2.) It is ruining, for it makes the sinner flee from God, and cast away the means of recovery, and so ensures their destruction; besides that it often drives the sinner to put an end to his torment here, by leaping into endless torments before the time, as in the case of Judas. And while we see how Satan is ready to take advantage, we had need to take heed.

2. Beware of presumption. Take heed that ye do not flee from

the one rock to dash on the other. Indeed, despair is tormenting, while presumption is easy. Nevertheless, though none of them is good, yet a person presuming is ordinarily in greater hazard than one despairing; for the presumptuous sees not his case as the other does: the one is well pleased with his damnable condition, the other is weary of his, and wishes to have it changed; so that many more perish by the one than by the other.

To conclude: Remember, on the one hand, God is a holy jealous God, who cannot away with sin, or a state of sin, but the fire of his jealousy burns against it. On the other hand, remember that the blood of Christ takes away all guilt, his Spirit overcomes the most hopeless case, and his mercy reaches wide for every condition. Fear him, ye that hope in him; hope in his mercy, ye that fear him; for "the Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy." Amen.

JESUS VICTORIOUS OVER DEATH.*

SERMON IX.

ISAIAH XXV. 8,

He will swallow up death in victory.

SUCH as are desirous duly to manage this solemn communion occasion, will have in their view the other world. We are all on a journey towards it, and, if suitably exercised, will improve this occasion to lay down our measures for eternity. Betwixt us and that other world, lies the great gulf of death; through it are two passages; one deep and devouring, where the sinner passes alone; there the waters flow with all that force and strength which they acquired by the breach of the covenant of works. By this passage, sinners are thrown out into the land of utter darkness and misery. The text shews us the other passage, which is shallow and safe, where the sinner passes on at the Mediator's back, the waters being dried up by the soles of his feet, whoso passeth this way, enters into Immanuel's land, the land of life; for "he will swallow up death in victory."

In these words, we have a prophecy of the happy success of a battle fought by the Mediator on account of elect sinners. The suc-

* Delivered Saturday, October 4, 1718.

cess is most certain; therefore it is in the Hebrew, "He hath swallowed up," &c.—Here consider,

1. The combatants; the two mightiest that ever encountered. Upon the one hand is death, with his devouring mouth, a champion who never yet could find his match among the children of men, till the great HE, in the text, entered the lists against him, even Jesus Christ, who being man, was capable of feeling the force of death; but being the Lord of hosts also, ver. 6, could not but be conqueror at length. So death and the Mediator are the combatants.—There is,

2. The encounter of the combatants, implied in these words, "He will swallow up death in victory." Death attempting to prey upon that elect world which was given to Christ by the Father, he, as Mediator, to pluck that prey out of death's devouring mouth, encounters the terrible enemy while he is making havock of poor sinners; and, having taken upon him the guilt of his elect, which gave death a power over them, death advances against him, and attacks him, and he abides the contest. No sooner was he born, than Death, mounted on his pale horse, advanced against him, and striking at him, filled Bethlehem with the blood of babes and the shrieks of parents. Though it could not then reach him the deadly blow, it pursued him still, shot out its poisonous arrows against him all along, till they came to a close engagement on the cross, where it wrestled him down even into the grave, the proper place of its dominion. So the Mediator got the first fall.

3. But behold the issue of the battle. Death, who in all other battles wins whatever party loses, loses the day here; the victory is on the side of the slain Mediator. The slain Saviour again revives, gets up upon death, stands conqueror over it, even in its own territories, breaks the bars of the grave, takes away the sting it fought with against him, and puts it and all its forces to the rout; so that it can never show its face against him any more, Rom. vi. 9, "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over him."

4. The Mediator's pursuit of the victory, till it be complete for these that are his, as well as for himself: "He will swallow up death in victory." The vanquished enemy has yet many strongholds in his hand, and he keeps many of the redeemed ones at under; some of them as prisoners, that they cannot stir; others of them though they can stir, yet can go nowhere, but they must drag the bands of death after them. But the Mediator will pursue the victory till he swallow up death, totally abolish it out of his kingdom, that there shall no more of it be seen there for ever, as a thing that is swal-

lowed up is seen no more at all; our Lord is cutting it down daily, and the last of it shall go over at the last day, 1 Cor. xv. 54, "So when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.—These words contain in them this

Doct. That our Lord Jesus, having fought death, and obtained the victory, will pursue the victory, till death be utterly abolished out of his kingdom.—Three things are here to be attended to.

I. The battle.

II. The victory.

III. The pursuit.—After which,

IV. I shall subjoin some practical improvement.

I. We shall consider the battle betwixt death and the Lord of life.—And,

1. Under what character has the Lord of life fought this battle? He fought it,

(1.) As the head and representative of the elect world, as their Mediator, who took burden on himself for all that the Father had given him; for otherwise he had nothing to do with death; nor had it any concern with him: John v. 15, "I lay down my life for the sheep." Adam, the head of all mankind, had betrayed us all into the snare of death, we were not able to break it, or to make our escape thence; but Christ undertook it for the elect, as their Head, and so sought death in their room and stead: 1 Tim. ii. 6, "Who gave himself a ransom for all." "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed," Isa. liii. 5. He bare what we should have borne, stood the shock which would have ruined us; he was wounded and bruised in this battle, but all for us. Ver. 8, "For the transgression of my people was he stricken." And hence we are reckoned in law to have died in him: Rom. vi. 10, 11, "For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

(2.) As their Redeemer and Deliverer: Hos. xiii. 14, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death: O death! I will be thy plagues; O grave! I will be thy destruction." By sin we fell a prey to devouring death, the broken law concluded us under the power of it. The prey could not be taken from this mighty one, without both price and power; so Christ

engaged with death, and by his death ransomed death's prisoners: Heb. ii. 15, "That through death he might destroy death, and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." He spoiled it of its power, that they might get free. The kingdom he had received of his Father could not be recovered, nor the captives set free, without stroke of sword, his overcoming death, that held them fast; therefore he fought the battle.

(3.) As a captain or general at the head of his people: Heb. ii. 10, "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." God has designed that the elect shall fight their way to heaven, and therefore has given them Christ as a leader and commander: Isa. lv. 4, "Behold I have given him for a leader and commander to the people." They must march through the Red Sea of death to the upper Canaan; but Christ goes before, drying up the waters. There are cords of death on the most lively believer, yet he must set himself to break them; but Christ has made them like a thread of flax, when it toucheth the fire. They must encounter the king of terrors; but the King of glory, marching in the front, has received all the deadly sting—I shall consider,

2. The attack made upon him by death. Death, finding the Mediator standing in sinners' stead, advances against him with all its forces, with which it was furnished by the breach of the first covenant; and, when managing this contest,

(1.) Death brings up its strength against him, that is, the law, 1 Cor. xv. 56, "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law," which, finding him a sinner by imputation, cut him down, Gal. iv. 4, "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." The law cries for justice against sin, and justice takes the Mediator by the throat, saying, Pay what thou owest; then he "restored what he took not away," Psalm lxix. 4. The law brings up against him a black band of curses, and pours into his soul: Gal. iii. 13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." It soon began to shoot its arrows against him. When he was born, he must be born in a stable, laid in a manger, for there was no room for him in the inn; persecution is raised against him in his infancy; he must be all along a man of sorrows, poor, not having where to lay his head; he is hungry, thirsty, weary, &c. At length the battle grows hotter, the heavens are black above his head; and in the garden, and on the cross, showers of arrows dipt in the curse fly at him. He sweats bloody

drops, falling down to the ground,—cries out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

(2.) Meanwhile he that has the power of death (Heb. ii. 14.) advances against him, Satan sets upon him in the wilderness with most grievous temptations, Matt. iv. Being beat back, he returns, and renews the assault: Luke iv. 13, "And when the devil had ended all the temptations, he departed from him for a season." At length the hour and power of darkness comes, and then the bands of hell exert their utmost vigour against him, storms from hell blow hard upon him, the fountains of the great deep are opened on him: John xiv. 30, "Hereafter I will not talk much with you, for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." Col. ii. 15, "And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

(3.) The congregation of men dead in trespasses and sins stir up themselves against him: Isa. liii. 3, "He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and we hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." Judas betrays him, the Jews gape on him like a lion, crying, Crucify him; Pilate condemns him; he is scourged, crowned with thorns, smitten on the crowned head, his body racked till it was all out of joint, nailed to the cross, hangs there mocked, and pierced with a spear.

(4.) Death comes with its sting upon him, and pierces him to the heart, and casts him down dead: 1 Cor. xv. 56, "The sting of death is sin:" this gives it the power of hurting any. The guilt of all the sins of the elect lay upon him, which could not but make the sting of death inexpressibly sharp and piercing. Thus a thousand deaths in one met together on him, for the Lord made the iniquities of us all to meet on him; and all the arrows that should have pierced all the elect for ever, have entered into his bowels; and, having fallen under death, he was carried prisoner to the grave.

II. Let us consider the victory Christ obtained. He tells us he has fought and overcome: Rev. iii. 21, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. Yea, he has triumphed over his enemies in his glorious ascension into heaven. Consider,

I. How this victory over death was obtained. It was obtained,

(1.) By his death. This was the decisive stroke: Heb. ii. 14, "That through death he might destroy death, and him that had the power of death." It was such a victory as Samson's last victory over the Philistines, when he pulled down the house, and

died himself with the Philistines in the fall of it; and therefore he cried upon the cross, "It is finished." Death has done its utmost and can do no more; by his death he satisfied the law in all it had to demand of him as the elect's Surety; he paid the debt, and removed the guilt. Sin being removed, and the law satisfied, death has no more that strength or sting wherewith to set upon him at first; and so it fell with him.

(2.) By his resurrection. Thereby he got up above death, which had lost its power, and could hold him no longer, Acts ii. 24, "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." He stood a conqueror in the grave, death's own quarters; he broke asunder its iron bars, and brought away its keys; behold they hang at his girdle, Rev. i. 18, "And have the keys of hell and of death." So death's dominion over those that are his, got an irrecoverable stroke, and he that had the power of death as to the elect, namely, as an executioner, viz. the devil, was also destroyed.—I next inquire,

2. What sort of a victory it is Jesus hath obtained over death?—It is,

(1.) A dear-bought victory, it cost the glorious Conqueror his precious life; he suffered the bruising of his heel, before the serpent's head could be got bruised. He suffered in his body, and also in his soul, to such a degree, that the holy human nature could not have borne up under it, had it not been supported by his divine nature.

(2.) A complete victory in respect of himself, though not yet complete in respect of his members: Rom. vi. 9, "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over him." Now he is beyond the reach of death and all his enemies, sitting at the Lord's right hand until he make his enemies his footstool, Psalm cx. 1.

(3.) A glorious victory, saints and angels singing the triumphant song. Hear the acclamations of joy and wonder with which he was met at his return from the battle, Isa. lxiii. 1, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with died garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." What a glorious victory was it which he obtained over the king of terrors, who subdues the most potent armies, overcomes the conquerors of the earth; but behold the great spoiler spoiled, the conqueror conquered by the King of glory.

(4.) An everlasting victory. Now death's power is irrecoverably broke; the serpent is wounded in the head, which is a deadly

wound, it shall never be able to rally its broken forces against him any more; it went out into the world full, but the King of saints has met it, and spoiled it, so that it in some sort is now empty.

As a practical improvement of what has been said, I would on this occasion earnestly call upon you,

1. As mortals, dying men and women, to come over this day to the conqueror's side. Our Lord has obtained the victory over death, come ye and surrender yourselves to him, break your covenant with death and hell, enter into his covenant, and honestly enlist yourselves under his victorious banners, abide no longer among his enemies.—To prevail with you, I would lay before you the following motives.

(1.) If ye are out of Christ, ye live in death's territories; yea, ye are dead; while ye live, death hath dominion over you, Eph. v. 14, "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." Ye are spiritually dead, the threatenings of the law, as the bands of death, gird you about; the divers lusts ye serve are as the chains of death unto you. O! awake, ere ye be cast out of this world, and buried out of his sight.

(2.) The conqueror is ready to receive you, and give you the privileges of the subjects of his kingdom, Zech. ix. 11, 12, "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit, wherein is no water; turn ye to the stronghold ye prisoners of hope, even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee." Christ is coming this day in the word to your graves, and saying to you, as to Lazarus, Come forth, bestir yourselves, O prisoners of hope! and come away, when the Redeemer and deliverer, who has overcome death, is calling you! Abide not under the dominion of the foiled enemy, but come away to the victorious Lord of life.

(3.) Behold how he loved the children of men, John xiv. 13, "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." Why did he fight this battle with death, but to rescue sinners to himself, as a prey out of the mouth of the devouring lion? Shall not his dying love win you, his dying groans awake you, out of your sleep in sin? Does not every wound he received call you to cast away your sins which lay so heavy on him? will ye love death, and slight the Redeemer, Prov. viii. 26, "All they that hate me love death."

(4.) How will you grapple with death, if ye come not out of your sins to Jesus Christ? Man, remember thou must die; the day is coming these eyes will be closed, the breath that is now going out and in will go, to return no more till the last pulse beat. How

wilt thou be able to grapple with the king of terrors alone? Death cast down the man Christ; if it did so to the green tree, what will become of thee, a withered, dead branch? Thou shalt find death lively as to thee, armed with its sting against thee, since thou art not in Christ, his victory belongs not to thee, but the first death will turn thee over into the hands of the second death; and so thou shalt be eternally dying, but never die.

(5.) Come to Christ and thou shalt have the benefit of his victory over death: John viii. 51, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my sayings, he shall never see death," never feel the sting of death, its nature shall be quite altered to thee. O! are ye not thinking what way ye shall get through that ford on that Red Sea, which ye know not how soon ye may come to? Come to Christ, lay hold on the conqueror by faith, in the way of his covenant; the sealed covenant will be your pass for safe conduct to the other side; it has carried all through that took their passage with it hitherto, and so will it you.—I exhort you,

2. To prepare yourselves for celebrating the triumph of this victory. The saints above are celebrating it at the upper table, ye are called to celebrate it at the lower table: "This do ye in remembrance of me." Let not Satan get advantage of such as look for the benefit of this victory, to slight the memorial of it, lest they vex the Spirit of God, and pour contempt on Christ's institution, and give their souls such a throw as they will not easily recover, while their fig-leaf covers of excuses will avail them nothing. Let none, however, venture rashly on such an ordinance. Take heed to your state, see that ye be not the King's enemies, but his friends, by your coming honestly into his covenant, and putting a divorce into the hands of all your idols. In the midst of the triumphal throng, he will notice the man that wants the wedding-garment: Matth. xxii. 11, "And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding-garment." Sinners dead in trespasses and sins are not fit to celebrate the memorial of Christ's victory over death. Off with the grave clothes of your lusts, then, that you may be fit guests for the Lord of life on such an occasion.—Take heed to your frame; a dead frame is not fit for such an occasion. Alas! for the deadness on the spirits of professors at this day. O! labour to get a lively frame of spirit, wherewith to celebrate the memorial of Christ's victory; get faith, love, repentance, desires, thankfulness, &c., in exercise; and for this end, I recommend to you this night, to meditate on, and take a believing view of this battle.—Consider,

1. It was a set battle; not an accidental rencounter, but deter-

mined from eternity: Gal. iv. 4, "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." Zechariah in his time proclaims the war: Zech. xiii. 7, "Awake, O sword! against my shepherd, against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts." Nay, it was proclaimed in paradise: Gen. iii. 15, "And I will put enmity between the woman and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." The ceremonial law, by which so much blood was shed, plainly predicted that a bloody day was coming.—It was,

2. A hot battle. Heavy were the strokes given here: Psalm xxii. 14, "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint, my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death." It was a bloody battle, Isa. ix. 5, "For every battle of the warriors is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning, and fuel of fire." A dreadful noise was here, the law, men and devils, crying against the Son of God, death roaring for its prey, and the Mediator himself crying with strong cries and tears. What garments rolled in blood were here on every side!—rolled in the most precious blood of the Son of God: Isa. lxiii. 2, "Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat?" A bloody spouse have we been to him.—It was,

3. A solitary battle on Christ's part. His enemies were many, but he was alone: Psalm xxii. 12, "Many bulls have compassed me."—Isa. lxiii. 3, "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me." All were against him, none were with him to take a share; so thick did the arrows of death fly, that neither man nor angel durst set out their head, or venture into the battle on his side.—It was,

4. A longsome battle. He fought all along, from the cradle to the grave, from his birth to his burial: Isa. liii. 3, "He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" though it came to a height at the latter end.

Lastly, There were no quarters for him in this battle: Rom. viii. 32, "He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to the death." He was made to drink a cup of pure unmixed wrath. He met with no sparing, that so, the arrows of death being all spent on him, his people might get free.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.*

SERMON X.

ISAIAH XXV. 8,

He will swallow up death in victory.

YE have been celebrating the triumph of Christ's victory over death, and professing yourselves the subjects of the conqueror, yea, the members of his body. If you approve yourselves true to your profession, here is the best news you can possibly hear in this world, news which may animate you to fighting the good fight: "He will swallow up death in victory."

I have yesterday handled two heads in the method. A third point now to be spoken to is, Christ's pursuit of the victory. Our Lord Jesus will pursue the victory he has obtained over death, till it be utterly abolished out of his kingdom.—Here,

I. I shall premise some things for the better understanding of this point.

II. Show how he pursues the victory.

I. I shall premise some things for the better understanding of this point.—And,

1. I premise that sin entering into the world, death obtained an universal dominion over mankind: Rom. v. 12, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;" it reigned as a king, ver. 19, "Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses;" it became universal monarch, swaying its sceptre over all nations, kingdoms, and empires, from the one end of the earth unto the other. Every man receiving life in this world, not excepting those that are born to crowns and kingdoms, are born subjects to death. It is the most terrible king, even the king of terrors; an absolute one, against whom there is no rising up. This universal dominion it got by law, upon sin's entering: Gen. iii. 19, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." 1 Cor. xv. 56, "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law."

2. The kingdom of death consists of two very different territories or countries; one is the upper country, namely, the sinful world; the other the lower country, in the other world, that land of utter darkness, where the light is as darkness. In the former, the government of death is comparatively mild, but in the latter inexpres-

* Delivered Sabbath evening, October 5, 1718.

sibly horrible. Here death's subjects have some gleams of light, joy, hope, though mixed with many sorrows; but there they will never see light more, nor enjoy the least ease from their pangs, which is the second death, Matth. xxii. 13, "Cast him into utter darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

3. Death's power over sinners by the law, reaches to the transporting of them out of this world into its dominion in the other world; it has power to carry them to the pit, and shut the bars thereof for ever upon them. Hence we find the rich man dying, and buried, and then in hell lifting up his eyes, Luke xvi. 23; an impassable gulf is fixed between that miserable company and the saints above, ver. 26; so that by death's power, had it not been hemmed in, all mankind had landed there.

4. That all mankind might not perish, the Father gave a kingdom to his Son, which he was to conquer out of the kingdom of death in this upper world: in which kingdom life might reign for evermore through Jesus Christ: John vi. 37, "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." This our Lord undertook willingly, resolving to spare no expense, even of his own blood, to recover it.

5. Our Lord Jesus coming on this expedition, findeth all mankind fettered with the bands of death; death has seized them all without exception, fastened on their souls and bodies, keeping them as prisoners, till they should be transported into the pit from whence there is no redemption; and his own that were given to him of the Father, he finds wrapt up in the common ruin; so he, putting on a zeal for his Father's glory and the salvation of the elect, encountered death in their room, and, after a bloody battle, gained the victory. But after all this the chains of death still continue on his people, and they lie under them till the conqueror, who by his death has purchased their liberty, come and loose them, in pursuit of this victory.

I am now to consider,

II. How he pursues the victory, "swallowing up death in victory."

1. He looses the bands of that spiritual death under which he finds them, morally dead, lifeless, senseless, and motionless to any spiritual good. He puts a principle of spiritual life in them, quickening them by his Spirit, Eph. ii. 1, "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." With authority he asks the grim vanquished tyrant, as he did others in the case of Lazarus, O death! where have ye laid him? He comes to the grave, saying,

against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people, and ye shall know that I am the Lord."

As to this separation, we observe,

1. That in it there is something negative; and that is, the Lord denies them the influences of his grace, countenance, and fellowship; they are deprived of benefits, their sins withhold good things from them. The scripture expresseth it by the Lord's hiding his face from sinners, as it is said in the text, by shewing them the back, and not the face, Jer. xviii. 17; by forgetting them, Hos. iv. 6. Thus the sun of many is gone down, they "stumble at noon, as in the night, and are in desolate places as dead men," Isa. lix. 10. They go up and down in the world, as walking statues, carrying dead souls in their bodies as living coffins; for God is gone, and his glory is departed from them.

2. There is something positive in it, sin kindles a fire against the soul. (1.) There is a standing controversy God has against sinners; Amos iii. 3, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" God is displeased with the creature, his Spirit is grieved at him. Anger rests in the bosom of God against the sinner, as long as he keeps the sinful morsel under his tongue, which, though pleasant to the poor soul in the meantime, is most displeasing to a holy God. (2.) There is a pursuing of this controversy against the sinner; some positive outgoings of God's anger against the soul, in angry looks, which, if perceived, are enough to put the stoutest sinner out of countenance. In this way did the Lord look unto the host of the Egyptians, through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled them, Exod. xiv. 24. Angry words, even sad threats, ministered by the word and the man's conscience; also sad strokes upon the soul, sometimes upon the body, sometimes on both at once, are measured out.

But to this it may be objected, says one, "Happy am I then, for I see no such thing." Answ. Were there no more upon most of us than we feel, we would have a very light burden either of sin or wrath upon us. But take heed ye be not like Ephraim, Hos. vii. 9, "Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea, grey hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not." Or like the Ephesians, chap. iv. 19, "Who being past feeling, gave themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." Are you going on in your sins? then be sure God is going on against you, pursuing his quarrel; and even in small things, if it were but the miscarrying of a basket of bread, the curse of God is in it to a wicked man, which makes it in itself very heavy. There are two kinds of strokes upon the soul: (1.) Deadening

strokes; these are secret strokes which God gives, and they are not easily perceived. By them the conscience is deadened, the soul stupified, and thus the man is fattened for the day of slaughter. People think never to get their fill of ease, and sometimes the Lord gives them enough of it: Hos. iv. 17, "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone," (Heb. give him rest). (2.) Quickening strokes: Hos. v. 14, "For I will be to Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah; I, even I, will tear and go away, and no one shall rescue him." By such strokes the conscience is made like Mount Sinai, when there was nothing but thunder, and lightning, and the sound of the trumpet waxing louder and louder. Many men's consciences are like iron taken out of the fire, and having lain a little, no fire appears there; but when some drops of water fall on it, it makes a hissing noise.

But the objector still says, "On the contrary, I find Providence very favourable to me." Answ. Is it in spiritual good things? findest thou that because he lives, thou livest also? Is Providence kind to thee in influences of grace, communion with God? surely, then, Christ has taken away the separation wall. But is it in external things? then know that these are no discriminating marks of nearness to God; see Job xxi. 7, God is kind to you as ye are to him; Lev. xxvi. 27, "And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me, then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury." He tells them they walked with him by accident, by the bye, when they chanced to light on him; and he says he will walk with them so too. What good the wicked does, is for another end than the glory of God; and what good he does to them, is oftentimes in wrath.

Now this separation is twofold; 1. Total, agreeing to the wicked only, to whom, in respect of their state, God is an enemy. This is that state of separation from God in which we are born, produced by Adam's sin, Rom. v. 12, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." This, to some, even to the elect, is only temporary, the separation wall being pulled down, and they brought near by the blood of Christ, applied by faith at their conversion, Eph. ii. 13. To others it is eternal, who, living and dying in a state of distance from God, are separated from God, soul and body in hell for evermore; according to that, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." This eternal separation is not meant in the text, but it is a certain consequent of the other, if it is continued in, for none are brought near to God in glory, who are not, by grace, first brought near to him here.

2. There is a partial separation, which agrees to the godly, who have the root of the matter in them. Sometimes the Lord is provoked to withdraw from his own people: "I opened," says the spouse, Song v. 6, "to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself; my soul failed when he spake; I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him but he gave me no answer." Sometimes Christ's garden is left, so that there is no blowing of the Spirit there, Song iv. 16. Hence the saints are so often praying to God to return to them. Often may we see the King's children, having their white robes sullied with tears, and rolled in the dust, because of a departed God. What a mournful voice has the sweet finger of Israel often, under desertions and hidings of God's face! Heman looks upon himself as a burgess of the land of darkness, not only forsaken but forgotten, Psalm viii. 8. This makes them, with Job, cry out, "O! that it were with me as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shone on my head!"

II. I shall evince the greatness of the evil of separation from God, which many go so light under. Alas! many reign like kings with God; they be like king Saul, when God departed from him; but how sad a thing this is, will appear, if we consider,

1. What God is. Every thing in God speaks terror to those that are separated from him. I shall only take notice of these following: (1.) God is the chief good; and therefore to be separated from God is the chief evil. Our native country we look on as good; and therefore to be banished from it is a heavy trial. Relations are good, life and liberty are good; and, therefore, to be deprived of them is very afflicting. But God is the chief good; all these petty good things disappear, and dwindle into nothing, when compared with God. How dreadful, then, must it be to be separated from him! If the enjoyment of him is the highest pinnacle of happiness, separation from him is the lowest step of misery. It is often observed, as an aggravation of the sufferings of the primitive Christians, that they suffered not only from the emperors who were accounted monsters of men, but also from those who were admired by the people for their virtues. Surely, then, to be cast off by goodness itself in infinite perfection, must be very distressing. (2.) God is all-sufficient in himself, and to the creatures. The enjoyment of him makes truly happy; and therefore to be separated from him is a dreadful evil. While David thinks on God as his portion, his heart leaps for joy: "The lines," says he, "are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage," Psalm xvi. 6—9. While Cain sees himself driven from his presence, his punishment appears intolerable. The frowns of those we depend upon, and can-

not live without, are very grievous. To forsake the "fountain of living waters," Jer. ii. 13, is held forth as a great evil of sin; and to be partially separated from it, must also be a great punishment. (3.) The omnipotence of God. Job takes notice that "the arrows shot against him were arrows of the Almighty," Job vi. 4. Let all the men on earth, and devils in hell, let the angels come down and help to draw the bow, still it is but finite power against the man; but how terrible would it be, to be a mark to these arrows! how much more, when the Omnipotent God pursues the quarrel! (4.) The absoluteness of God. Let men and devils work against the sinner, let them do their utmost, there is one that can stay their hands, and say to each of them, "What doest thou?" but God is a King against whom there is no rising up. There is none who can stay his hand, or say unto him, "What doest thou?" Dan. iv. 35. Can the pots hinder the potter to dash them all in pieces? Or can worm man shake off the yoke of God's absolute dominion, and live in a separate state from him? (5.) God is eternal. If a great man be our enemy, we know always death will end the quarrel; if we have such an one to be our friend, yet death will tie up his hands, that he can give us no more favours: but God endures for ever. Had a man not only the earth, but the heavens for his portion, yet "the earth shall be burnt up, and the heavens wax old as a garment;" thieves may steal away the covetous man's treasures out of his barns and coffers; moths may consume what remains, the devil in wicked men may take away all he has in the world; only God is an everlasting friend and portion. It must, then, be very sad to be separated from such an one.

2. All created things are empty and unsatisfactory. They are a lie, alluring afar off; but when men come near, they answer not their expectations. The world, that bulky vanity, that great round nothing, can no more fill the heart, than a triangle a circle. All created things stand as two lame legs under vanity and insufficiency. He was a fool, indeed, that laid up for his soul in his barns, as if his swine and his soul could have fed at one trough. Cain had the broad world to find himself support, but all was sapless: his punishment from God's face was greater than he could bear. Where God is wanting, there is a void which a thousand worlds cannot fill up; and therefore, if you know the truth, ye would say to your sins, to your lusts, "Ye have taken away my God, and what have I more?"

3. To be separated from God is the saddest plague out of hell. When God departs, he leaves a burden on the soul behind him, which, when felt, will make the soul to roar: "Yea, woe also to

them when I depart from them," Hos. ix. 12. Who can tell the ills the sinner is exposed unto, when once sin separates between God and him. Saul felt a total separation; and what a desperate project did it set him upon! Job felt a partial separation, which was so heavy, that his soul choosed strangling and death, rather than life," Job vii. 15.

4. Nay, it is a very hell to be separated from God. Therefore David complains, "that the sorrows of death compassed him, and that the pains of hell got hold upon him," Psalm cxvi. 3. Even coals of hell are cast upon the godly in this world, when their sins have made this separation; only they are softened with love, whereas those cast upon the wicked are dipped in the poison of the curse. Men by their sins now greedily sue out a separation from God. What will hell be, but a giving them their will? For the torments of hell are summed up in that, "Depart from me, I know you not."

5. I shall only add, that those that continue in a state of separation from God, have no quarter to which they can turn for comfort in an evil day. We know not what sad trials we may live to see. When men that are seeking great things for themselves now, may think they are come well to, if they get Baruch's part, their life for a prey; but for a man to be in Samson's case, the Philistines upon him, and God departed from him, must be heavy indeed. We must all die: this we know. Let a man squeeze his cisterns, then, with which he now solaces himself in his separation from God, what will they do for him? they will not be able to stay his fleeting and fainting soul. We must rise again. Will the gods ye now serve, help you then? Will the sea, the rocks, or mountains, fall on him, will the earth cover him, who, to enjoy it, incurred a separation from God? No, no! O ungrateful earth, that the man consumed time, heart, and strength upon, while his days lasted, that will not take part with him, now when he is not able to do for himself. We must stand before his tribunal, and come near before his throne for judgment, whose presence we now forfeit for the satisfying of our lusts. What will comfort us then, when we see we have passed this partial state of separation from God, as a short preface to an eternal separation from him.

III. I am now to inquire, how sin makes this separation betwixt God and a soul?

1. There is the guilt of sin, whereby the sinner is bound over to misery for his sin. God, from vindicative justice, acts against the wicked; and this justice of his naturally requires punishment to be inflicted on the sinner, according to the law. Hence, when Adam sinned, a flaming sword was set to keep him off from the tree of life.

The enjoyment of God is the greatest good; now, justice will not permit this, while guilt remains untaken away: and therefore, separation from God necessarily follows. As to the godly, by their guilt they are bound over to fatherly anger and chastisements, whereof that partial separation from God is the chief part.

2. There is the stain and defilement of sin. Now, God is of purer eyes than to behold evil. An unholy sinner cannot have communion with a holy God; and in regard that some are altogether polluted, they are therefore altogether separated from God. Others are only in part polluted, by reason of some one or more sins regarded in their hearts; therefore are under that partial separation, Psalm lxvi. 18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." The leper, for his uncleanness, was put without the camp; so is the sinner. They only are admitted to stand in the holy place, who have clean hands and a pure heart, Psalm xxiv. 4. Hence says James, chap. iv. 8, "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you: cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded."—It remains,

IV. That I make some practical improvement from this subject. We have,

1. An use of information. We may hence see, (1.) That it is sin which makes a land weak, mean, and contemptible, and is the cause of all national calamity; for sin separates between them and their God. Then their strength is departed from them; and therefore, though the people should unite with one another, there is little good to be expected so long as such abominations abound in the land, setting God against us. O that we might see the day, when, uniting with heaven, we might be zealously affected in reformation; and the heaven-daring abominations that abound, in principle and practice, be zealously suppressed. But every one minds their own things, few the things that are Christ's. (2.) Why so few have communion with God in ordinances, public, private, and secret. Are there not many at public ordinances dead and lifeless, sitting like idols that have eyes and see not, hands but handle not? Why, sin has separated between God and them. Hence they go as they came; no intercourse with God. The Lord goes by them, and comes by them, speaks to the hearts of others, but not to them. They cannot walk together; for they are not agreed. (3.) Why so many slight religious duties? Some will not bow a knee to God; they will not commune with their hearts, nor converse with God. Sin hath separated them; and what pleasure can they take to converse with an enemy, or one that has turned his back to them? Hence some are not afraid of any company so much as themselves; and therefore, if

their consciences begin to speak, they labour some way or other to divert it. (4.) Whence is the root or cause of all the misery professors are lying under at this day? Security, barrenness, withering, desertion, and the like. What wonder that it be so? They may thank themselves for the whole. It is their dallying with some bosom idol, their grieving the Spirit, and slighting his motions and convictions, their worldliness and unwatchfulness: these are the root, the cause of all their misery.

2. A use of exhortation. (1.) To those who enjoy nearness to God. O beware of sin! If ye give way to it, it will soon turn your wine into water, and overcloud your enjoyments. Live at a distance from it; for it is the very thing from which you are in such great hazard. (2.) To those who are by their sins separated from God. Break off your course of sin, continue not in it. Is not the separation wall high enough, and thick enough already? what needs more be added? What shall you do to get the separation taken away?—Lay hold on the Lord Jesus by faith, Isa. xxvii. 5, "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me." Jesus is the ladder that knits heaven and earth together. It is by him that God reconciles the world to himself. His blood takes away both guilt and pollution. It purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Though God hears not sinners, yet in Christ he is well pleased; and through him they may find access to, and acceptance with him. He is our peace: he is the Mediator between God and man. Repent, and turn from your sins. There is no concord between Christ and Belial. To enjoy both God and your lusts is impossible; ye shall as soon bring together the two poles. However some make a mock of sin now, yet it has separated, and will separate them from God eternally, if they separate not from it.

THE FOLLY OF RESISTING, THE WISDOM OF COMPLYING WITH THE GOSPEL CALL.*

SERMON III.

MATTH. xxi. 29,

He answered and said, I will not; but afterwards he repented, and went.

THE scope of this parable is to shew, that many who have been the vilest of sinners repent and go to heaven, when others, who, though they have a profession of religion, never go farther than a mere profession, and so fall short; partly, also, to shew that many who had been publicans and harlots are now in a better case than the chief priests and scribes. To convince of this, Christ spoke the parable before us.—For understanding of which, I would notice, that the man in the parable represents God; the two sons, two different sorts of people among the Jews. Both had the gospel call by John the Baptist. The first of the sons points out the publicans and harlots, who, though they were formerly most vile and hopeless creatures, yet, on their hearing of John, repented, and became disciples indeed. The second represents the priests and pharisees, who, notwithstanding of their high pretences to religion, yet were indeed strangers to it, their practices did not correspond with their profession.

In the text, which concerns the first son, pointing out the penitent publicans and harlots, we have two things.

1. The sinner's first answer to the gospel call; and it is a short one; "I will not." Like Israel, Psalm lxxxi. 11, "But my people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me." The sinner so loves his sinful ease, that he cannot think of the work in God's vineyard. Observe in this answer, (1.) The rudeness of it. The son remembered not that he was speaking to a father, so has not so much as a fair word to bestow on him. O the rude treatment Christ meets with at sinners' hands! They remember not his authority over them, nor do they regard it; but they will be their own; who is Lord over them? (2.) The plainness of it. He tells the matter plainly; says not, he cannot, but he will not. It is want of will to the work of religion that is the great stop. Sinners' hearts cannot relish the work of religion: the bent of

* Delivered on Saturday, 31st July, 1714.

3. The gospel calls you to your generation work. Acts xiii. 36, "For David, after he had served his own generation, by the will of God, fell on sleep." Wherefore were you sent into the world, and made members of society? Was it not to honour God, and to be useful to your fellow-servants? Surely God sent none of us into the world to play ourselves, like the leviathan in the sea; nor to be like mice and rats, good for nothing but to eat that for which others have laboured. Far less did he send you to be agents for the devil, to advance his kingdom, and to oppose the work of the Lord in the places where you live; nor yet like the beasts, only to eat, drink, work, and sleep. To your work, then, your proper work, the service of God. Perhaps ye will say, ye have not been idle; but what have ye done for God in your day? What have ye done for the good of any soul? What have ye done to pluck any brand out of the burning? I fear, if we reckon our days according to what we have done for God in them, most of us may reckon our days lost days. Look up to God, who placed you in the world, and say for what good purpose you have taken up room in his earth. For what use are you in the world? God has given you a talent, what have you gained? He has placed you in such and such situations and relations, have you done the duties of each? I am to shew,

II. Why is it that sinners will not comply with this work?

1. Because it is the work to which, of all works, their hearts are most averse. Rom. viii. 7, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." They would rather do any thing than go and work in God's vineyard. It is against the grain with unrenewed minds. The prodigal would rather feed swine than go back to his father, till he came to himself. Judas would rather go to a halter, than go to Christ for pardon. It is like cutting off a right hand, and plucking out a right eye. The sinner's neck is flexible enough to the devil's yoke; but it is an iron sinew to Christ's yoke. He that has a will to any thing, he has no will to this, till a day of power make him willing, Psalm cx. 3.

2. Because of prevailing love to carnal ease; Prov. xxvi. 15, "The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth." The man loves to sleep in a sound skin, and therefore will die in his nest, if God do not in mercy set a fire to it. Sloth is so sweet a sin, that the carnal heart can never get a fill of it, Prov. vi. 10, "yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep." The man lies in the bed of sloth, and would not miss heaven if it would fall down into his mouth, or if *wishing* and *woulding* would do it. But if these will

not do, he must even want it, for he cannot leave the embrace of his dear ease. Fighting, running, praying, striving, wrestling, using heavenly violence, and the like, he cannot away with.

3. Because Satan furnishes them with work more agreeable, and it they will do; therefore God's work they will not meddle with: John viii. 44, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." When the call of the gospel comes to sinners, Satan does with them as Pharaoh did with the Israelites, holds them more to their tasks; so they have always busy hands, and hearts full of their work, insomuch that they cannot get the work of religion minded to purpose. And what are they doing? They are busy weaving the spider's web; very busy doing nothing, or hatching the cockatrice egg, doing worse than nothing. They have much to do, having the desires of the flesh and mind to fulfil. They have more to do than they are able: they have the devil's swine to feed; they have a fry of living, lively, hungry lusts, that groan about their hearts, crying, Give, give, to satisfy. These they will serve all their days.

4. Because the world gives them another thing to do. Like the people invited to the marriage-supper, Luke xiv. 18, "They all with one consent begin to make excuse." There are too many of Pharaoh's mind, that think religion is only for them who have no other thing to do; as for them, they have no time for these things, and they wonder how any person should expect it of them. They are so delighted with considering what they shall eat and what they shall drink, that they cannot get time to think what they shall do to be saved. They have enough to do to get their daily bread, they cannot get their starving souls minded. They have so much to do to provide for to-day, and to-morrow, that they cannot get time to provide for eternity. They never had such joy in the everlasting covenant, in the benefits of it, or seals of it, which they have in a good bargain where they gain something. Therefore they live like moles in the earth, never to open their eyes, till in hell they lift them being in torment. I go on to enquire,

III. Why this refusal should be retracted? why they should repent and aim at compliance with the gospel-call.

1. Because this refusal is against the respect and duty which you owe to him who calls you to the work: Mal. i. 6, "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: If I then be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you. Have you no regard to the authority of God? or has not he that made you a power over you, to prescribe your work? Will ye follow the dictates of your own corrupt pas-

sions, even against the plain dictates of his Spirit? Shall we thus by our obstinacy affront our heavenly Father, and grieve his Spirit?

2. Because this refusal is full of the basest ingratitude. What is the meaning of all the gospel-calls, but—Sinners, do yourselves no harm? Your interest is advanced by working; Job xxxv. 7, "If thou be righteous, what givest thou him, or what receiveth he of thine hand?" If thou ply the work of religion, the advantage is thine own; if not, the loss remains alone with yourself: Prov. ix. 12, "If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it." It is a great favour that thou hast access to the work. Had not the Son of God made way for it through his own blood, thou hadst never got such a call.

3. It is the most foolish and unreasonable refusal that can be; and if the sinner were not out of himself, he could not be capable of it. What! will a starving man refuse to have meat when it is offered him? or will a convict refuse liberty? But this ye do in refusing Christ's call, and so judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life. Are sinners so foolish, as to hold fast and drink the cup of poison, when they are entreated to throw it away? This folly and madness will be bitterness in the end.

Lastly, You are ruined if you stand to your refusal. That obstinacy will bar you out of heaven and the favour of God for ever. Heaven is a rest prepared, not for loiterers, but for labourers; and you that will have your ease now, must bid farewell to it for ever in another world: Prov. i. 24, "Because I have called, and ye refused. I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, and I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me; for that they hated knowledge, and did choose the fear of the Lord." Salvation-work will not work, unless men bestir themselves; but damnation-work will go on when men sit at ease, and are carried down the stream into the ocean of the wrath of God.

IV. In the last place, I am to make some practical improvement; in doing which, I shall confine myself, for the present, to an use of exhortation. I would exhort refusers of Christ and of religion to take their word again, and to comply with the gospel-call. Ye have had many calls to engage in the work of religion with earnestness, but the answer of the most part is, I will not; and thus one refusal comes on the back of another.

You have had many calls from the word of God to fall to your work, and what has been your answer to these messages of God by his servants, but that—I will not? Have you not heard many exhortations which have never affected you? Have you not gone back to those very sins for which reproofs have met you in public ordinances, and yet you have held them fast? Has not duty been laid plainly before you, and you have found means to put it by? and still the answer is, I will not.

2. Has not God pursued some of you by afflictions to drive you to your work, and yet no awakening to repentance and reformation, but still the language of your practice has been, I will not. The Lord, in his holy providence, has sent you losses, crosses, and distresses of divers sorts, to bring you to your duty; but, O! may it not be written on rod after rod, You have not yet returned to the Lord?

3. Nay, has not the Lord sometimes so met you in a sinful course, that you could not but say, This is the finger of God? and yet ye would be froward, ye would go back to the sin again. What is the language of that, but—I will not? Have ye not fallen under Jotham's curse again and again? Judges ix. 15, whereby fire has flashed out of some one or other bramble, under which you have rested, on your faces to burn you, instead of that shade ye thought to find under it to refresh you. Has not your conscience awakened on you sometimes, and the arrows of conviction fastened on you, and yet you have refused? Ye have murdered convictions, and never been at ease till conscience has been silenced. You have run away from God, even with his arrows sticking in you, saying in opposition, I will not.

Lastly, Have you not often delayed complying with the call of God, and set the time for your going to work? Yet for all that is come and gone, your eyes have never seen that time yet. What is delaying but plainly a refusal?—"I will not." For there is no word of God that says, Go, work to-morrow, or the next day; it is, To-day, if ye will hear his voice; son, go work to-day. So that he that will not work to-day, but pretends he will do it afterwards, plainly refuses the call, and will not.

To promote your compliance with the call, I would offer a few weighty motives; as,

1. Repent now, and fall to that work ye have formerly refused; for it is a work preferable to all other works. The work of religion is your main, your chief work. (1.) It is the most pleasant work. Many are disgusted at the work of religion, because they think it unpleasant. But they have not yet tried it, and therefore are not fit judges. You have a more favourable account of it from Prov.

iii. 17, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." See also Psalm iv. 7, 8, "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased. I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety." There is work indeed in the vineyard that is very unpleasant to corrupt nature; but even out of this arises the most refined satisfaction to the new nature. And what are all the pleasures of the world, to reconciliation with God, and that peace of conscience and joy that there is in believing? (2.) It is the most profitable work. The profit thereof is both for time and for eternity; 1 Tim. iv. 8, "For bodily exercise profiteth little, but godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." The profits of it are durable profits: they last, and will be profitable, when all others will be of no avail. Hereby you will gain the life of your souls, and, as the loss is incomparably great, so also is the gain of it. (3.) It is the most necessary work. It is the one thing needful, absolutely needful, Luke x. 42. We cannot be happy here or hereafter without it; we are undone for ever.

2. Ye are always working something. The greatest idler on earth is in some sort always busy. God does not require of you more work, but other work. The soul of man is like a watch, that goes as fast in going wrong as in going right. How sad is it, that, seeing men are always doing something, they should refuse only that work which would honour God, and save their own souls! Will you not, then, for God's sake, and your own sake, change your work?

3. It is sad work you are working while you refuse this. If you be not working out your own salvation, you are working out your own damnation. We are always going forward; if not pressing a step nearer heaven, you are a step nearer hell. Every refusal, yea, every sin, is a new impediment in your way to heaven, a new call to Heaven for vengeance on the sinner, builds the separation-wall the higher, and lays on the greater weight to sink you for ever under the wrath of God.

4. Consider, if ye be not in some sort at as much pains to ruin your souls, as otherwise might save them. There are difficulties in the ways of sin, as well as in the ways of God. Is the work of religion a toilsome work? but do not ye many times weary yourselves to commit iniquity? Is there not as much pain when a sinner deprives himself of his night's rest, racking himself about the world, as when a saint communes with his heart on his bed about eternal things? The sinner travels to bring forth sin, Psalm vii. 14. What more than this at the hard duties of religion! Since he that en-

gages not in the work of religion is cumbered about many things, had he not better take up with the one thing needful? The saint has but one master to serve; sinners have many, not only at war with God, but at war among themselves, one lust dragging them one way, and another another way.

5. The time is coming, when working in the vineyard will be over; and if ye continue to refuse, ye know not if ever you will get another offer; "for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." This day's delay may be an eternal loss, for you may be in eternity before another day. A new refusal is dangerous; God may take you at your word.

6. Our Lord is content yet to invite you to his work, notwithing your former refusals; you will still be accepted: "Him that cometh unto me," says Jesus, "I will in nowise cast out."

7. Whatever hardships may be in the work of religion, it is not long ere you shall be freed from them all; you shall be made more than conquerors: "You shall rest from your labours, and your works shall follow you."

Lastly, If you will not, then remember death will make you change your mind, and you will get a long eternity to repent that ye did not repent in time. But such a change can then be of no avail, but to increase your misery. Infinitely better, then, will it be for you if this change take place at present; "for now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation."

THE NATURE AND EFFECTS OF A WEANED DISPOSITION OF SOUL.*

SERMON IV.

PSALM CXXXI. 2,

My soul is even as a weaned child.

THIS psalm is David's profession of piety, wherein he discovers what was the habitual bent of his heart, and course of his life. The occasion of it seems to have been the injury done him by Saul and his courtiers, who reproached him as a proud, ambitious, and turbulent man. His comfort is the testimony of his own conscience,

* Delivered on Sabbath afternoon, August 1, 1714.

which witnessed, 1. The humility of his heart. This kept him from an aspiring temper, and within the bounds of his station. 2. His easiness in any condition with which the Lord was pleased to tryst him. God had promised him the kingdom, yet kept him from it long, and that in very hard circumstances; but yet he was easy under it; he was far from that restless itching after a crown, of which his enemies accused him.

In the text, he points out the spring of this easiness: "My soul is even as a weaned child:" that is, his heart was loosed from those things to which the hearts of men naturally are glued. There is here, 1. Something supposed, namely, that the day was, when he was sucking the breasts which fallen Adam led all his children to, as well as others; that he was even as fond of them, and could as ill want them, as a child the breast. 2. Something expressed; that now there was a change, the child was weaned, set to another way of living, and could want the breasts. God had taken off his heart from those things on which naturally it was set, and now he fed at God's hand, instead of creatures'. He does not speak of willingly forsaking these breasts of his own accord, but he was weaned by the power of grace. Now, this is his comfort against the aspersions of his enemies. From this subject I take this

DOCTRINE, That grace makes a weaned soul.

In discoursing which, I shall inquire,

I. From what does grace wean the soul?

II. How is the soul weaned from these things?

III. What are the effects of a weaned disposition of soul?

IV. Make some practical improvement.

I am to inquire,

I. From what does grace wean the soul? Grace weans the soul, 1. From the dry breasts of the world. One part of pure religion, and undefiled, before God and the Father, is to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, James i. 27. For, says John, 1st Ep. ii. 16, "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." The soul of man is not self-sufficient, and must fetch in its satisfaction from something without itself, seeing it is capable to desire what it hath not to furnish itself with. Our first father Adam did us two ill turns; he led us out of the path of life, not knowing how to get into it again, and so left us with a conscience full of guilt; he led us away from the living God, not knowing how to return to him again, and so left us with a heart full of unsatisfied desires. Hence the poor soul is like the horse leech, having two daughters crying,

Give, give; a restless conscience, and a restless heart, to each of which it must say, as Naomi to Ruth, chap. iii. 1, "My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?" But alas! the first way it goes for that, is through dry places, as the devil, when he goes out of a man. For the restless conscience seeks rest in the dry and barren region of the law, Rom. x. 3, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness;" for the restless heart goes to the creatures, saying, Who will shew us any good? The poor soul, like a hungry infant, weeps and crys, shifts about as it can, gaping for something to fill the mouth. The world is nearest, and there it fastens and sucks. The soul has fallen off the breasts of divine consolations, and cannot set itself on again, and therefore takes up with the breasts of the world; but grace takes off the soul again. And,

1. Grace weans the soul from the profits of the world: Heb. xi. 26, "Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures in Egypt." The natural man fixes on them, drinks greedily at the broken cisterns. His hungry heart flies out after them, as a ravenous bird after its prey; he is restless till he get them, as the child is for the breasts; he is fond of them, when he has them, as the infant plays with the breasts. They say they are become rich, they have found out substance, Hos. xii. 8. But when grace comes, it stops the chase. It makes the bulky vanity, that can only satisfy the fancy of children, and not souls of men, dwindle into nothing.

2. Grace weans the soul from the pleasures of the world. Pleasure is a necessary ingredient in happiness, and men cannot but seek it; hence God proposes it to the soul in the enjoyment of himself, Psalm xvi. 11, "In his presence there is fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for ever more." But the soul, instead of going to God for it, to drink at the pure fountain, naturally goes to the muddy streams of it in the world, and there sucks,—is as fond of the lusts of Egypt, flesh, &c. as the Israelites; yea, can as little live without them, as the sucking child without the breast: 2 Tim. iii. 4, "They are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." But when grace comes, it makes the soul fall off, and looses the heart from these things.

3. In a word, grace weans the soul from all worldly comforts whatsoever, making it take up its rest in God: Luke xiv. 6, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." The heart of man takes a greedy grip,

naturally, of relations, liberty, life, and such things. These are their good things, which they can no more part with than the child with the breasts. Take these away, what has the man more? He has not a God. He will rather part with God and Christ than these things. But grace puts matters right; it regulates the affection to these things, and makes a soul ready to give up with them at God's call.

2. Grace weans the soul from the foulsome breasts of sin, so that it loaths that which it loved before. The soul in its natural state is like Israel, Ezek. xvi. 4, "Not cut, neither washed in water to supple them; not salted at all, nor swaddled at all." They had lain long in the foul womb of Egypt, and after they came out, they were still sucking in the Egyptian manners, customs, and abominable courses. Thus men suck the breasts of sin; they seek satisfaction in those things which they ought not so much as desire; they greedily drink of what God forbids them to taste; they are as fond of their sins as a child is of the breast, their hearts are averse to part with their sinful courses. There is a sweetness in these to their corrupt hearts, which they cannot want. For, let a man go the round of all created lawful gratifications in the world, and squeeze the sap out of them all to satisfy his heart, they are so empty, that he will break over the hedge, to try if forbidden fruits will make up the want which allowed fruits cannot do. But grace weans the heart from these breasts. It makes the person say, "That which I see not, teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do so no more," Job xxxiv. 32.

II. How the soul is weaned from these things?

1. Grace lays gall and wormwood upon these breasts, and so embitters them to the soul that it is made willing to give over sucking them. The heart is made loath to part with them; and though it is often about to give up with them, yet it still goes back again, hoping to suck sweeter than before; but still the gall and wormwood lies there, and more and more is laid on till the heart be actually weaned. The way is hedged up with thorns. Hence, "she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then it was better with me than now," Hos. ii. 6, 7. Now, there are two things that serve to embitter these breasts. (1.) Continual disappointments from them. Though the man is always seeking satisfaction from them, he can never get it. Like the prodigal, Luke xv. 16, "He would fain fill his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him." The man is like one in a mist: he sees something, and it appears a house; he comes to it, and it is but a stone. His hope

rises again on another view, comes forward to it, and it is but a bush. They fall always short of expectation; and his most blooming hopes are blasted. When he is going to take in the most pleasant fruit, providence makes it even fall between the hand and the mouth, Hos. ix. 2, "The floor and the winepress shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail in her." Let him make his bed where he will, there is always a thorn in it. (2.) Severe wounds arise from them. The man leans with great delight on the broken reed; and ere he is aware, it pierceth through his hand. He sucks eagerly at the breast, and, instead of milk, wrings out blood. When striking the rock for water, instead of it, the fire flashes out in his face. Perhaps from the very thing from which he expected his greatest comfort, arises his greatest cross. Rachel must have children, else she dies; she gets them, and dies bringing them forth. But all this will not wean the soul; therefore,

2. The Lord fills the soul with better things; "Open thy mouth wide," says God, "and I will fill it," Psalm lxxxi. 10. If the nurse take away the breast, she will not put an empty spoon into the child's mouth. The soul of man is an empty, wavering thing, must always have something to feed on; and will hold what it has as good for it, till it get what it counts better. The man will not quit hold of the world and his lusts, till he open his hand to take hold of Christ and all the benefits of the everlasting covenant in their stead. Therefore, the great transaction of the soul with Christ is called buying of him, in which if a man gives away his money, he gives it not but for as good, or better. Thus grace weans the soul; for, saith Jesus, John iv. 14, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." Hence, two things are evident. (1.) That only the enjoyment of God can wean the soul, and the soul will never be at rest till it rest in God. The heart of man must have a match, and will be ranging through the world for a match, till it meet with Christ, who is the pearl of great price; and, to gain this, quits with all. The soul of man will be a restless night-walker till the day of grace dawn, and discover Jesus the plant of renown. If they cannot work themselves happy, they will try to dream themselves happy, and prepare themselves a feast of a thousand airy nothings; possessions of the heart, though not of the hand. (2.) That the soul will never be boasted away from these breasts. The very dung, and asses' heads, will be precious in Samaria when there is no bread. Who is there that has not rational conviction of the world's vanity? yet men throng into the house, craving a fill. Why is it that men

so often seem to give up with it, and in very deed have satisfaction in nothing, and yet go just back to the same door, where they have got a thousand nay-says, and seemed to have got their last answer? Why, truly, the devil is gone out of the house, but it is empty, it is not filled from heaven, and it must not stand empty; therefore, he returns with seven spirits worse than himself. I shall now inquire,

III. What are the effects of a weaned disposition of soul?

The soul is weaned at its first conversion to God. Then it is taken off the breasts; but it is hard work, and tedious. The soul is never perfectly weaned till death. As there is an uneasiness and fretfulness in new weaned children, till thoroughly weaned, so is there in the case of the children of God while here. Hence it is said to them, Psalm xlv. 10, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear: forget also thine own people, and thy father's house." So the effects of this disposition are more or less strong, as souls are more or less thoroughly weaned. I shall notice some of these effects.

1. The weaned soul is a resigned soul: "If any man," said Jesus, Matth. xvi. 24, "will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." When the soul is weaned, the long war betwixt our own will and the will of God is at an end, and our will runs captive after the wheels of the Lord's triumphant chariot. The will of the weaned soul is moulded, (1.) To the will of God's commandments. The stony heart is broken, yea, melted down, to receive the impression of whatever is God's will for our duty. Its language is, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" No right hand, or right eye, more to be spared. They esteem all God's precepts concerning all things to be right, and they hate every false way, Psalm cxix. 128. All carnal reasonings, in favour of lusts, must yield to the great authority of the Lawgiver. (2.) To the will of his providence. It will no more rally its forces, to decide the question, whether God's will or their will shall carry it as to their lot; but as the weaned child is at the nurse's disposal, so will they be at God's. If that which is crooked cannot be made straight, they will comply with it as it is. If their lot cannot be brought up to their mind, their mind shall be brought down to their lot. Like Paul, "they learn, in whatsoever state they are, therewith to be content," Phil. iv. 11.

2. The weaned soul is cheerful, and not fretful in its resignation. He says, not only just, but "Good is the will of the Lord," Isa. xxxix. 8. It makes a man carry Christ's yoke evenly; for, to go drooping under it, is a sign of a heart not right weaned. What

God does is not only well done, but best done; so says the weaned soul.

3. The weaned soul stands on other grounds, when created comforts are with him, and even when created streams are running full: he draws his support in both cases from God as the fountain. Such say, like Hannah, 1 Sam. ii. 1, "My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord;" and, with David, Psalm xviii. 46, "The Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock: and let the God of my salvation be exalted." The world's good things shall not be their good things. They will love them as a friend, but not be wedded to them as a husband. They will use them as a staff, but not build upon them as a pillar.

4. The weaned soul will stand without them when these are gone, for they were not the props on which his house rested. Such a soul can adopt the prayer of Habakkuk, chap. iii. 17, 18, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be found in the vine; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Ah! that soul is in a sad case, whose comfort waxeth and weaneth, just according to the waxing and weaning of created comforts; is satisfied or starved, just according as these breasts are full or empty. Thus many lose all spirit and life in religion, when God takes away their worldly comforts.

5. The weaned soul uses creative comforts passingly. They follow the directions of Paul, 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31, "That both they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away." The greedy grip the heart takes of these things, in the use of them, is a sad sign of an unweaned soul. It was the sin of the old world, they were eating and drinking like beasts. The weaned soul will do in these like the dogs of Egypt, who run when they lap the water of the Nile, for fear of the crocodiles.

6. The weaned soul casts itself upon the Lord, without carnal anxiety, as the weaned child depends on the mother's care. This seems partly aimed at in the text. The soul is easy not on a sensible prospect, but on the faith of the promise. They are "careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let their requests be made known to God," Phil. iv. 6.

Lastly, The weaned soul strives to starve, but never to provide

for their lusts. These are the suckers, which, the more they are satisfied, just the more they crave. They have much to do who have these to feed.

IV. It remains to make some practical improvement. And,

1. In an use of information. This shews us, (1.) Who they are that have met with Christ, and been feasted at this communion; even those whose souls are now like a weaned child. Are your hearts turned to loath your lusts, weaned from sucking the dry breasts of the world, and ye must have your food from heaven? then the Lord is not sending you away empty. (2.) Your hearts are not right with God, while they are not weaned. If no weaning influences have reached your hearts, no gracious influences have. You will be nothing the better of this communion; nay, it is like you will be the worse of it; if you get not your hearts weaned on this occasion, your lusts will be more rampant after this; like the child that is most fond of the breast after it has been long away from it.

2. Use of exhortation. I exhort you to labour to get a weaned soul. To urge you to this, I would propose the following motives. (1.) How sad is it that a heaven-born soul should be held at such fulsome breasts as those fleshly lusts are, at such empty breasts as those of the world are! Is there not better food, and more plentiful, set before you, even Christ himself, and all the benefits of the everlasting covenant? Leave those to the swine, and let your precious souls eat that which is good. (2.) Your souls will never get satisfaction there. You shall as soon fill your hands with the wind, or grasp your arms full of dreams and shadows, as fill your souls at the dry breasts of the world. It is spending your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not. (3.) They are altogether unsuitable to your souls. The soul is spiritual, they are earthly things; your souls are immortal, they are perishing; and ye can no more feed on them to thrive, than fishes on meadows; nor in the breasts of your lusts, no more than salt water will quench thirst. (4.) A weaned soul would make you very easy. The man that has it can never be miserable, meet with what he will. The heaviest cross would be very light, if eased of the overweight an unweaned soul lays upon it. What is the rise of so much uneasiness, but that we are wedded to this and the other thing, and being exceeding glad to have it, are exceeding sorry to part with it. It would make you easy to others also. (5.) An unweaned soul is the root of apostacy; it will expose you to many temptations, and may carry you off from the way of the Lord altogether. It will make you a reproach to religion; and it had been better for you not to have known the way

of righteousness, than, after you have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto you, 2 Pet. ii. 21. If ye go back ye shall not feed on the seat at so cheap a rate as before. (6.) A weaned soul will fit you for suffering; and you have need of it, when the work of God is in such danger. It will keep you safe in times of trial, when others, glued to the world and lusts, will turn their backs. (7.) It will fit you for communion with God, and you shall have it. The manna fell, when the provision brought from Egypt was done. *Lastly*, It will fit you for heaven; and there you shall be filled.

In conclusion, study the mortification of your lusts. What need for these things, if you had not living lusts to feed on them? Feed on Christ and spiritual things. Take him instead of that which the world and lusts offer. Amen.

THE DANGER OF NOT WAITING ON GOD AFTER THE DUE ORDER.*

SERMON V.

1 CHRON. XV. 13,

For because ye did it not at the first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.

THE ark of God having been brought from Kirjath-jearim, and left at the house of Obed-edom, upon the account of the death of Uzza, whom God smote, God blessed that man and his house, where the ark was. The news of this coming to David's ears, he resolves again to attempt the bringing of the ark into his own city, 2 Sam. vi. 12. In this transaction, observe. 1. That the fear of mismanaging a duty may sometimes prevail so far with the people of God, as to make them lay by the duty for a time. David had seen how dear a rash touch of the ark had cost Uzzah; so, says he, 2 Sam. vi. 9, "How shall the ark of the Lord come unto me?" The fear of God, by reason of corruption, easily degenerates into a slavish fear, which cuts the sinews of holy endeavours, and leaves people neither heart nor hand for the work. 2. Lay by duty who will, God will always have some that will take it up. If David have no will for the ark to be with him, Obed-edom will entertain it. Many, in our own day, turn their backs on Christ, and his service; shut their hearts against himself, and their houses against his worship;

* Delivered August 2, 1707.

but God will always have some that will put their shoulders to his work. 3. They are great fools that lay aside duty. They stand in the way of their own mercy, and deprive themselves of that blessing that attends the service of the Lord. 4. The people of God, when they take up duty again, will see themselves the greater fools that ever they laid it by. Well, David, being resolved on the work, proceeds with great caution and circumspection, as we see in the verses preceding that of our reading: the reason of all which we have in the text.

In which words there is, 1. An old story brought fresh to mind: "The Lord our God made a breach upon us." The stroke reached Uzzah, and cut him off, while all the rest were safe; yet the holy man looks on that as a stroke to the whole congregation. 2. There is the cause of the stroke: The stroke was dreadful and astonishing, but the holy man lays not the blame on God, but on themselves, and so justifies God. The sin of the Levites was the cause of the stroke: "For because ye did not at the first," namely, sanctify yourselves when ye first began to remove the ark from Kirjath-jearim. They did not sanctify and prepare themselves, by solemn prayer and services, in consideration of God's will, as to the way of carrying the ark; as if he had said, We have smarted already by your carelessness, beware of it therefore at this time. The sin of all the congregation, wherein he takes in himself among the rest, also produced the stroke; and that because it was his and the people's duty to have been acquainted with the word of the Lord; and the oversight of the Levites did not excuse them. We sought him, indeed, bringing the ark, the symbol of God's presence, from the place where it was, to be in the midst of us; but our way of doing marred all. It was God's ordinance that the ark should be carried on the Levites' shoulders, Numb. iv. 15, and vii. 9; but the Philistines had put it on a cart. God did not punish them for this transgression, and this emboldened Israel to follow their example: but they learned by sad experience, that God would not bear that in the one, which he did in the other.—From this subject, I take this

Doctrine, God is highly displeased with persons who perform duties, but are not careful to perform them in a right manner.

In discoursing which, I shall shew,

I. How it comes to pass that men perform duties, but are not careful to perform them in a right manner.

II. How the Lord testifies his displeasure against such persons.

III. Why is the Lord so highly displeased?

IV. Make some practical improvement.

I am to shew,

I. How it comes to pass that men perform duties, but are not careful to perform them in a right manner.

1. Because to perform duty is the easiest part of religion, but to do it in a right manner is very difficult; and few people have a heart to manage the difficulties of religion. Ease is sweet; and in other things we see it very ordinary for men to take what is most easy instead of what is most profitable. It is an easy thing to think, to hear, to eat bread, and drink wine; but to plough up our corruptions, to engage in good earnest in the service of God, and to get the heart in a case for fellowship with Christ, is not easy, and sloth prevails.

2. Because the bare performance of duties is within the reach of all, the performing of them in a right manner is beyond the reach of the most part. Natural abilities will serve for the one, gracious abilities are necessary for the other. John xv. 5, "I (said Jesus) am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." "By faith (says Paul, Heb. xi. 4), Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh." Grace, you see, is necessary, and grace is very rare. A natural man is conjured within the circle of self, beyond it he cannot move; this is his principle, and this is his end. Nature cannot carry a man above itself, more than the mouth of a river can be higher than the spring-head. This, then, mars all, so that the service can no more be acceptable to God, than a man sowing his master's ground with his own seed, to reap it for himself.

3. By the bare performance of duties, men attain the base and low ends which they propose to themselves in the service of God; namely, (1.) Peace of mind, such as it is. The consciences of some are but half awakened; thus a little thing quiets them, even the external performance of duties; but should these neglect duties altogether, they could have no peace. (2.) It gains a man credit in the world, and that is a strong cord to draw men to the outside of duties, namely to be seen of men, and to have glory of men, as our Saviour expresses it, Matth. vi. 1, 2. It is to them no small matter to have a name to live; to be called good is affected by such as are at no pains to be good.

What shall we say of these that will set about duties, and attend sacraments, even while they are sure that they will be mocked and reproached for it by the wicked? Answ. It is good in so far as they are carried over these things; for, alas! there are some so pitifully weak, that they will be blown over with the wind of the

mouth of the wicked. A broad laugh, or silly taunt, out of the mouth of the profane, is an unanswerable argument against religion and seriousness, to some who are in the cause of Christ like silly doves without heart. Such as are thus chargeable are very inconsiderate; Christ gives a solemn warning to them, Mark viii. 38, "Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." We doubt not but a hypocrite may come this length. We do not wonder if even a miser, a covetous wretch, part with his money to buy land; neither need we wonder if a hypocrite should sacrifice credit among the profane, to gain credit among the godly. He does but as a man on a ladder, tread on the lower step to win to the higher.

4. Because men may get duties done, and keep their lusts too. For instance, they may go to a communion-table one day, and the next to the table of devils. But to perform duties in a right manner, is inconsistent with peace with our lusts: Psalm lxvi. 18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Hence, over the belly of an express commandment, people will venture to the Lord's table without self-examination, or at least without searching to the quick. They cannot, however, communicate aright without a due attention to it. No, indeed. Says the apostle, 1 Cor. xi. 28, "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." Many, notwithstanding, can communicate without it, and keep their lusts too; here is the hellish advantage. There are secret lusts, which the man is unwilling to disturb, therefore he will not light the candle and search, lest he be obliged to cast out the old leaven.

5. Because most men have low and mean thoughts of God, Mal. i. 6—8, "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master, if, then, I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name: and ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon my altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor, will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts." It is not every one that knows the Lord. Many men worship they know not what, and therefore they offer him for worship they care not what. If men had awful apprehensions of that God whom they worship, as a God greatly to be "feared in the

assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him," Psalm lxxxix. 7, doubtless they would see, that there is none in heaven or earth like him, and they would worship him in another manner.—Therefore the apostle, to engage men to take care how they perform duties, says, "Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire," Heb. xii. 28, 29.

I am now to shew,

II. How the Lord testifies his displeasure against such persons. He does so,

1. By withdrawing from them in religious services: "Son of man," says God by Ezekiel, chap. xi. 3, "these men have set up their idols in their hearts, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face; should I be inquired of at all by them?" And by Hosea he says, chap. v. 4, "The spirit of whoredom is in the midst of them, and they have not known the Lord." It is granted, ordinances are the galleries wherein the King is held; they are the trysting-places where Christ meets with his people; but if they be not gone about in a right manner, they will be but an empty sepulchre: "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" The living God is not to be found in a dead worship; when men withdraw their hearts from the service of God, then he withdraws himself from them; and it is but sorry entertainment a man can have at this feast, when the Master goes away.

2. By rejecting their services, Mal. i. 13, "Ye said also, Behold what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this at your hands? saith the Lord." God will not accept of such duties, whatever pains men may take about them, Isa. i. 11, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord." It is better to go halting on in the right way, than to be going straight in the way of error: "The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city," Eccl. x. 15. It may well be applied to the duties of some, what is said, Hab. ii. 13, "The people shall labour in the fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity." To labour in the fire signifies great pains, and great disappointments; they work in the midst of scorching flames, and what they do produce consumes between their fingers, they get no good of it.

3. By spiritual strokes upon their souls. There is a curse denounced against them, Jer. xlviii. 10, "Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully;" and Mal. i. 14, "But cursed be the

deceiver which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing. This will pierce the soul; and they are of two sorts: (1.) They are deadening strokes; these are silent blows, arrows that fly without noise from the hand of an angry God into the soul; "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert, and be healed," Isa. vi. 10. Sometimes men are like Saul among the prophets, but afterwards they are knocked on the head, it may be on a communion Sabbath, and from that time God answers them not. Many are sprightly professors for a while, but at length God is so provoked, that their hearts are deadened, their affections withered, their consciences stupified, their souls blasted, and they are then prepared to be pruned off, and cast over the hedge. (2.) Quickening strokes, whereby the man's name is changed; he is Mager-Missabid. The conscience is made like Mount Sinai, where nothing but thunder, lightning, and the sound of the trumpet, are to be heard. God takes the filthy rags of their lifeless duties, wraps them in brimstone, and then sets them on fire about the sinner's ears; so that, like the house built upon the sand, to which the man betook himself for shelter, the whole falls into ruins. As to this, you will observe what the prophet declares, Hos. v. 11—14, "Ephraim is oppressed, and broken in judgment; because he willingly walked after the commandment. Therefore will I be unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness. When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound; then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jereb: yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound. For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah; I, even I, will tear, and go away: I will take away, and none shall rescue him."

4. By strokes upon their bodies. Sometimes the Lord has mingled his people's blood with their sacrifices. Thus he did with Nadab and Abihu, Lev. x. 1, 2. A wrong look into the ark cost the men of Bethshemesh dear: "The Lord smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men," 1 Sam. vi. 19. Uzziah, taking hold of the ark, was struck dead, 2 Sam. vi. 7. And the apostle tells, 1 Cor. xi. 30, that for profaning the Lord's supper, "many (among the Corinthians) were weak and sickly, and many sleep," that is, were dead. One dies before his time, even in his strength; another falls sick, it may be after a communion. At communions there is a great throng; perhaps one has got a thurst, another has catched cold, but unworthy communicating has more often done the deed.—I shall enquire,

III. Why is the Lord so highly displeased?

1. Because God commands his service to be done in a right manner. The matter and right manner of performing duties are, in the command of God, linked together. He will have his service well done, as well as really done. We must serve God with a perfect heart and a willing wind, for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts; if we seek him, he will be found of us; but if we forsake him, he will cast us off for ever, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. Masters on earth challenge to themselves a power to oblige their servants, not only to do their work, but to do it so and so; and though they do the thing itself, yet if not in the manner required, it cannot be accepted. So they brought the ark, but they brought it on a cart, which was opposite to the command, for it should have been on the shoulders of the Levites; and therefore their service was rejected with vengeance.

2. Because the doing of a duty in a wrong manner alters the nature of it, and makes it sin. Hence the plowing of the wicked is sin. Hence prayer is accounted a howling on their bed, Hos. vii. 14. And unworthy communicating is not to eat the Lord's supper, 1 Cor. xi. 20. If a house be built of never so strong timber and good stones, yet if it be not well-founded and right built, the inhabitant may curse the day he came under the roof of it.

3. Because duties not performed according to the right order, are but the half of the service we owe to God, and the worst half too. The Jews had it written about the doors of their synagogues, "Prayer without intention is as a body without a soul." A skeleton of bones without the flesh would have been a very abominable sacrifice to have laid upon God's altar; no less abominable are our services, when the heart is not engaged, and when the soul is not lifted up to God: "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth," John iv. 24.

Lastly, Because duties thus performed are very dishonourable to God. See again, Mal. i. 6—8. Now, God is a holy God, and will be sanctified in them that come nigh him, and before all the people he will be glorified, Lev. x. 3. He is a jealous God in the matter of his worship, Josh. xxiv. 18.

IV. I am now to make a practical improvement. And this,

1. In a use of information. We may hence see what a mercy it is that we have a pure worship amongst us at this day; a worship neither defiled by idolatry, nor corrupted by superstition, but after the divine order, according to the pattern shown on the mount. It is dangerous to join in a way of worship not warranted by the word of God.

2. Let this fill us with a holy reverence of God when we approach

his presence in this venerable ordinance, Psalm lxxxix. 7. Let us know and remember, that the God with whom we have to do is a heart-searching, holy, and jealous God, who will not hold them guiltless that profane his ordinances. Was he so displeased with Belshezzar, for abusing the vessels of the temple? how much more with us, if we profane the symbols of the body and blood of his Son! The danger is great, both for soul and body. But there are two sorts that are ready to abuse this. (1.) The stiff-necked careless sinner will cloak his contempt of communicating, and his sloth with this: "If it be so, then we will do best not to meddle with it." But, O Sirs! is there not an odds between rushing on the sacrament, and forsaking it? Assure yourselves this contempt of the sacrament is damning. God can reach a blow to you, though ye stand far off from his table; and so much the more, that you slight the love-token of a dying Lord. (2.) The poor broken-hearted sinner will be ready to drink up discouragement from this, fearing that he may be the person on whom the Lord will make the breach. But, poor soul! I would say to thee, Where wilt thou be safe, if thou keepest thyself without the ranges? the sword of the Lord may overtake thee there, for the neglect of your duty. Therefore come, though trembling, venture thyself at his feet; acknowledge, that if he should make thee a monument of his justice, he is most just, thou deservest it. A trembling hand may receive a pardon. Be diligent to prepare thyself; and when thou hast done all, lay no stress on any thing, but flee to Christ, and get him between an offended God and thy soul. Dry stubble may be safe before a consuming fire, if there be a crystal wall between it and the fire.

I conclude with exhorting all that intend to sit down at the Lord's table to-morrow, to take heed how ye communicate. I would urge you to do it in the right order. Ye have heard the danger of an opposite conduct; this may be sufficient under this. Another motive is, that duty done in a right manner, and that only, has the blessing connected with it: mark Matth. xxiv. 26, "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing." A man may pray a thousand times, and never be heard; go from one communion to another, and never be sealed; one sincere groan from the heart will do more than all these. If ye mismanage this sacrament, your souls may get such a stain that they will never cast again; and if ye manage it rightly, ye may get such a taste of the goodness of the Lord as ye never got before. With this view, see that ye be right as to your state; that you be the friends of the Bridegroom, or you have no right to sit down at the marriage-feast. It is not the due order, for persons dead in sin to sit down

at the table of our Lord; it is an ordinance only for those who are quickened, and made spiritually alive; it is the children's bread, and therefore they only, who are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, have a right to it. Endeavour to be in a right frame; to have grace in exercise; a holy hunger, faith, repentance, and love. It is not enough that you have oil in your lamps, you must also have your lamps trimmed, and the oil burning. Your graces must be in exercise. If this be your state, and this be your frame, then surely it will be good for you to draw near to God at his own table: "They that thus wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up on wings like eagles, run and not be weary, walk and not faint."

THE PERFECTION OF PROVIDENTIAL DISPENSATIONS.*

SERMON VI.

PSALM xviii. 30,

As for God, his work is perfect.

THE Psalmist by this time had followed the Lord through many a deep step, and he had endured various troubles. Here, in the text, he looks back on these ways in which the Lord had led him, and gives his verdict as to them: "As for God," &c. In the words there is,

1. A magnificent preface: "As for God." He stands up here in his defence against an ungodly world, to justify his proceedings: "As for God," I that have tried his way can speak to his commendation.

2. What of God he commends: His way. There is a twofold way. (1.) That wherein men walk to and with God.—Personal; Christ, who is the way to the Father:—Real; holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. None of these are here meant. (2.) The way wherein God walks with men, the way of his providences, his dispensations, the way he takes with men in disposing of them.

3. The commendation is perfect; there is no flaw in that way. Be his dispensations never so hard, there can be no fault really observed in them by the most discerning eye; they are faultless. These words afford us this

* Delivered July 16, 1709.

Doct. That the dispensations of providence are altogether perfect and faultless, however they appear to our carnal hearts.

In illustration I shall,

I. Take notice of some, among many, seeming faults our corruptions would spy out in the dispensations of providence.

II. Inquire in what respects the way of God is perfect.

III. Confirm the point.

IV. Make some practical improvement.

I. I am to take notice of some, among many, seeming faults our corruptions would spy out in the dispensations of providence.

1. The reason of dispensations not seen. The design of Providence lies oftentimes hid, and it is no easy matter to discover it: "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known," Psalm lxxvii. 19. The Lord leads the man and he knows not where; therefore corruption is ready to storm at this, and disdains to follow the Lord, unless he will tell him what way he is going; but the fault is in the eye, not in the way. Time is big with the discovery, but must go a while before it is brought forth: Acts x. 17, "Now, while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate." John xiii. 6, 7, "Then cometh Jesus to Simon Peter; and Peter said unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." When the spectacles of faith are on, no fault appears.

2. Providence seeming to forget the promises, and the word seeming to miscarry. Then we are ready to say, as in Jer. xv. 18, "Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail?" Abraham thought he saw this fault, and he would take a way of his own to rectify it. But though the promise tarried, yet it was accomplished, for Isaac, and not Ishmael, was to be his heir. Fools' haste is no speed.

3. Providence going cross to the promises, his works to his word, pulling down with the one hand what he seemed to be building up with the other. Thus it appeared, when Abraham was commanded to sacrifice Isaac, Gen. xxii. So also it was when God threatened to cut short the days of Hezekiah, Isa. xxxviii. 1. But there is no fault here yet; wait the end, as in these instances; they are but raw travellers, who think that the way lies always even forward; the way in the wilderness is often crooked.

4. Providence running, as it seems, quite contrary to the design

of it. Many times the Lord has a design on foot for the good of his church and people; but a continued tract of disappointments cross it more and more, till the very grave-stone seems to be laid upon it. Thus it was with Joseph, when he was put into the dungeon. But what fault is there here, more than when the sun sets to make it darker and darker, till day-break. Stay till the dawning of the design. Oftentimes providence reads best backwards: "For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left," Deut. xxxii. 36.

5. Providence laying aside the most likely means. But where is the fault here? for if he lay aside these means; he will accomplish his designs by other means, and what though they be unlikely? This stumbled the world, 1 Cor. i. 23, 24, "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks, foolishness: But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Naaman in distress stumbled at the unlikeliness of the means prescribed by the prophet for the cure of his leprosy, 2 Kings v. 11. The disciples of Jesus also stumbled, and judged the death of Christ a very unlikely mean of leading him and them to glory; and they had the same opinion of his ascension, John xvi. 6, 7. Men have their own ways: they will needs think that they know best what is good for them. But God knows that his people are not good choosers of their own lot, and sovereignty will have a latitude.

6. Providence falling on means quite contrary to the design of it. But what the worse was the blind man that he was cured with clay put upon his eyes? The Lord works healing by wounding, and comfort by tears. The earthquake, the troubling of the waters, the dungeon of Joseph, the den of Daniel, the whale of Jonah, yea, we know, that "all things work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose," Rom. viii. 28.

7. Wicked godless men getting the sunny side of the brae, walking contrary to God, and yet providence smiles, that never an ill turn almost misgives in their hand. This made Asaph stammer, Psalm lxxiii. 12—14, "Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world, they increase in riches. Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." It shook Jeremiah, chap. xii. 1. 2. But there is no fault in this, that the sun of prosperity rises on the wicked: "For when the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they may be destroyed for ever," Psalm xcii. 7. The sun rose fair

on Sodom that very day on which it was destroyed; all Israel followed Absalom; Jonah fled from the presence of the Lord; Haman finds all things going to his wish. But see the end of all these things.

8. Astonishing strokes lighting on those that are most dear to God. Eccl. viii. 14, "There is a vanity which is done upon the earth, that there be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked." Eli's sons are slain, his daughter-in-law dies, and himself breaks his neck. The two sons of Aaron die at the altar. How numerous were the afflictions that came upon Job. But where is the fault here? Christ's cross, to a child of God, is better than the world's crown, 2 Cor. xii. 9. 10.

9. Great afflictions meeting the Lord's people in the way of duty. This was Jacob's case in many instances. He was in the way God bade him go, yet he met with many trials and afflictions. It hath been so also with many of the Lord's people in all ages. But the Lord has his holy ends in these things; he shews them that they are sinful creatures; though they are in his way, tries their faith and patience, and makes way for higher experiences.—I am,

II. To shew in what respects the way of God is perfect.

1. All the dispensations of providence are exactly according to the pattern shown in the word. If you would know wherein a man has exactly built a house, look to the draught given him. Meet with what we will, all may be reduced to, and explained by, scripture doctrines, prophecies, promises, threatenings, or examples.

2. They are exactly suited to the necessities of his people, and to the designs of them. God weighs every grain of sand which he puts in our glasses; he will never put in too little, nor too much; nothing wanting, nothing superfluous. Deut. xxxii. 4, "He is the Rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is he."

3. In respect of the times of them. Nothing too soon done, nor too late; all fall out in their proper season, determined in the unchangeable council of God.

4. In respect of its stability. Our ways are unstable, and that is a great fault; but God's ways are not so. That which is crooked cannot be made straight. There will always be a crook in our lot. That is sure, and we could not walk even without it.—I shall,

III. Confirm the point. Consider,

1. That the saints in their experience see this. They readily and fully acknowledge it, Hos. xiv. 9, "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them, but the

transgressors shall fall therein." This is their unanimous vote when in a right mood, and will be so in heaven, when the web is out. Then will they say, "He hath done all things well."

2. That they are all the product of infinite holiness, which can do nothing wrong.

3. That they are all directed, as well as contrived, by infinite wisdom, which knows best how to frame matters.—It remains that,

IV. I make some practical improvement, in

1. A use of information. Are the dispensations of providence all right? Then, (1.) If any thing be wrong with us, we may see where the fault lies, not in God, but in ourselves, Job x. The oar he rolls his vessel with is in the waters of affliction, and therefore we think the oar is crooked; but that is our misjudging of God. (2.) That we should justify God in the harshest dispensations, give him the glory, even when we walk on the mountains of darkness. Providence will abide a look of the most piercing impartial eye. But when the eye is infected, it will take up things in their wrong colours.

2. Of comfort to the people of God, whatever providences they meet. Be they never so dark, be they never so little understood by them, yet they are all right and faultless. God does not distribute favours to them by guess, but by measure and weight.

3. Of reproof to those who censure, murmur, and quarrel with the dispensations of providence. This is, (1.) to accuse God of folly, as if he were not wise enough to govern the world that he has made. O how often fall we into this, as if we could have ordered better than providence has done. Murmuring will step up, and correct the escapes of infinite wisdom. (2.) Of injustice, as if he were too hard upon his creatures, that deserve better at his hand. For why would people murmur at their right and due? (3.) Of impotency, as if he could not take away our crosses as easily as he brings them on, or could not make them work for our good.

Lastly, Of exhortation. Let all of us, especially the Lord's people, be exhorted to submit and stoop to sovereignty, be our lot in the world what it will. There is none want their own crosses. Every one has some burden or another to bear; and if we would in truth come after Christ, we are enjoined "to take up our cross, and follow him."

FEAR AND HOPE, OBJECTS OF THE DIVINE COMPLACENCY.*

SERMON VII.

PSALM cxlvii. 11,

The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

THERE are times of danger in which the event is very doubtful, but even then the safety and success will always be on the side the Lord casts them. In consequence, it is an important question, How may we engage him on our side? Certain it is, his pleasure lies not in created strength. Horse and foot, courage and strength, may be on the side which God will disown, and which shall be worsted: "By strength," says he, "shall no man prevail," 1 Sam. ii. 9. His pleasure is in the strength of grace: "He will keep the feet of his saints;" or, as it is expressed in the text, "The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy."—In which words we have,

1. The character of those whose part the Lord will take in all their trials and troubles, and in all their encounters with their enemies. The first part of their character is, they are fearers of God. They have the awe of his majesty upon their spirits.—The second is that they hope in, or rather for his mercy. They, in a becoming manner, wait and patiently seek for relief from God, and that in the way of mercy through Christ, not for any thing in themselves. —Observe next the mixture of these parts of their character: They do not only fear God but hope in him; for fear without hope will sink into raging despair. They not only hope, but fear, for hope without fear will turn into presumption. These two God hath joined together, let not us put them asunder.

2. The privileges of these persons, whoever may be displeased with them, and however much they may be displeased with themselves, God takes pleasure in them. He accepts their persons, and their services, and he will show himself to be on their side. They shall not hope in vain; however hapless their case be in itself, they shall get a merciful relief in due time.

From these words, observe this

DOCT. The Lord takes pleasure in those, who, whatever case they be in, entertain a holy fear of him, with a kindly hope in his mercy.

* Delivered July 27, 1718.

In discouring which, it is intended,

I. Shortly to describe this holy fear, that in all cases ought to be entertained, with a hope of the Lord's mercy.

II. To describe that kindly hope of his mercy, to be entertained in all cases, along with this holy fear.

III. To shew the necessity of keeping up this holy fear and kindly hope in all cases together in the soul.

IV. To shew what is that pleasure the Lord takes in such.

V. To confirm the doctrine of the text.

VI. To make a practical improvement of the different parts of the subject.

I am, then,

I. Shortly to describe this holy fear, that in all cases ought to be entertained, with a hope of the Lord's mercy. This fear of God is,

1. An awe and dread of his majesty and transcendent greatness: Psalm lxxxix. 6, 7, "For who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened to the Lord? God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be held in reverence of all them that are about him." With this the lightness and vanity of the heart is to be repressed. The soul must entertain high and honourable thoughts of God, as a sovereign of independent being, in whom all perfections do concentre, must look up to the clouds, and behold him on his throne in heaven, and so bring itself thereby to a profound reverence of his greatness.

2. A reverence of his absolute, his unlimited authority and power: "Fear him," said Jesus, "who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him," Luke xii. 5; he can command us whatsoever he will, and dispose of us as he pleaseth. Let us have a reverential regard to the uncontrolable sceptre he sways over all creatures. Since he doth in heaven and in earth what seemeth good unto him, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What dost thou? we should silently submit to his disposals.

3. A fear of offending him in any thing: Psalm iv. 4, "Stand in awe, and sin not." This is a fear, and caution, and circumspection, which we should always carry about and never lay aside. We walk amidst many snares; Satan and a corrupt heart are ready to entangle us; but God cannot away with sin; it is the only offence we can give him. He is well pleased to see us afraid of offending him, to see the poor sinner affrighted at every thing that is provoking to him, and keeping up a holy tenderness this way.

4. A fear of imputing iniquity to him, or harbouring hard and unbecoming thoughts of his majesty, Job i. 22, "In all this Job

sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." The proud heart casting off the fear of God, arraigns and condemns the conduct of holy Providence as rigorous and unrighteous; and so murmers against the Lord. But holy fear silenceth the mutiny of these unruly passions, and says, "He does all things well, is holy and righteous in all his ways and works."

5. A dread of going out of his way for help, however hard the case be: Isa. viii. 13, 14, "Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread; and he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence, to both the houses of Israel; for a gin and for a snare, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be taken." Holy fear takes off the wheels of the chariot of impatience and unsanctified haste, which drives furiously to get out of that case in which infinite wisdom has placed us. The soul dare not adventure to shake off the yoke, till the Lord put to his own hand and take it off.

Lastly, A dread of his holy hand in his judgments: Amos iii. 8, "The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophecy?" This fear keeps the heart from slight thoughts of them, and furnishes awful thoughts of a smiting God, the weight of whose hand no man is able to bear. And there is here a dread of the hand of the Lord lying on their person for the past: Heb. xii. 5, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him." The man noticeth the stroke, and what impressions of anger are engraven on it, and so he putteth his mouth in the dust, if so there may be hope, Lam. iii. 29. Whatever he meets with, he takes it as from the Lord, and reverenceth the hand that smiteth.—There is, (2.) A dread of what the Lord may inflict upon him: Psalm cxix. 120, "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments." The fearer of the Lord sees, that whatever be his stroke, it is less than his deserving. They say as Ezra, chap. ix. 13, "Thou, our God, has punished less than our iniquities deserve;" and therefore submit themselves, lest the Lord make the stroke greater, and punish us seven times more.—Let us now,

II. Describe that kindly hope of his mercy, to be entertained in all cases along with this holy fear. It is,

1. A firm persuasion of the good, gracious, and bountiful nature of God, who delights not in the misery of his creatures; Psalm xxv. 8, "Good and upright is the Lord, therefore will he teach sinners in the way." Ezek. xviii. 23, "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God; and not that he should re-

turn from his ways and live?" God is the fountain of all goodness to be found in man or angel, and so is himself a boundless ocean of goodness. He loves to have poor sinners entertaining these kindly thoughts of him. And well may they do so, even under hard pressures, for God lays not on man more than is meet or right, Job xxxiv. 23; and even this he does with a kind of holy reluctance, for "he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men," Lam. iii. 33.

2. A hope of mercy to all their unrighteousness, through Christ. This is the great hope, called the hope of the gospel, Col. i. 23. For it is the main hope purchased by Christ to lost sons of Adam, and held forth to them in the gospel, Heb. viii. 12, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." To cast away this hope, is at once to throw dishonour on the mercy of the Father, and the blood of the Son, and the efficacy of his Spirit; to cast it away, is to please Satan, and to ruin our own souls.

3. A hope of good by their afflictions, trials, and troubles: Rom. viii. 28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." It is the Lord's ordinary way to bring his people nearer him by afflictions: "Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept thy word," Psalm cxix. 67; yea, by this way, also, does he bring in those that are strangers to him, Hosea v. 15, "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence and seek my face; in their afflictions they will seek me early." When the Lord will not use a rod upon a person, that is a terrible sign; but there is always hope when the Lord is at pains with a rod; and to hope for this good, is the way to advance it.

4. A hope of support and protection under their afflictions: Heb. xiii. 5, 6, "He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee; so that we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." The Lord can carry persons through deep waters, and yet keep them from sinking, for he is the lifter up of the head. However high the waters swell, they are still under the check of him whom the winds and the seas obey. The everlasting arms underneath, though not seen in the time, secure the sinner from sinking to the ground, and bring him safe ashore. Now, faith and hope is the way to bring in that support.

5. A hope of seasonable relief, on having such deliverance in due time, as shall be best for God's honour and their good: Psalm xlii. 5, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul! and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for

the help of his countenance." The Lord has many ways of giving relief from trouble. Sometimes he makes the storm blow off, and restores a calm; sometimes he hides them in the grave, and gives them a blessed exchange, for an afflicted life in this world, a joyful happy life in another world. It becomes us to hope for his mercy, in whatever way he may send it: Heb. x. 35, "Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward."

6. A hope of eternal life in a better world: 1 Pet. i. 13, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, (for what?) for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." These hopes will never please God that are confined to the things of this world. He has provided and offers better things to poor sinners; there is a hope laid up for us in heaven, Col. i. 5. While that hope remains firm and well grounded, happy is the soul, whatever be its case; and since he offers it, and makes it over to whosoever will embrace Christ, that hope should never be cast away while we are here.

7. A waiting for the mercy needed and desired: Psalm xxvii. 14, "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord." The hoping soul will wait for God, and bear till his time come, however long it may seem to be. He hath the times and seasons in his own hand. He knows what is the fittest time for giving a mercy, and we must leave it in his own hand, and wait on him: "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord: behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience, till he receive the former and the latter rain; be ye also patient, stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

Lastly, All this hope is to be grounded only on the free grace of God through Jesus Christ, and the precious promises of the word, held forth to us in him, 1 Pet. i. 13, quoted already. Therefore it is called hope for his mercy: "Remember thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." Psalm cxix. 49. If hope be founded on any work or merit in ourselves, or be not bounded by the promise, that is to say, if we hope for what God has not promised, then it cannot be pleasing to him; so that his hope follows faith's embracing Christ in the gospel, and resigning the soul to the Lord; which being done, hope goes and stands upon the watch-tower, to behold and wait for all promised good things coming with Christ from God in due time to the soul.—We now proceed,

III. To shew the necessity of keeping up this holy fear and kindly hope together in all cases.—They are necessary to keep an even bal-

ance in the soul at all times, ready to fall either to the one hand or the other. God's voice to us, is, Isa. xxx. 21, "This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." But, O! how apt are we to go off the road, especially if we are obliged to traverse the mountains of darkness and affliction, of desertion and temptation. But this fear and hope will hedge us on every hand, that we turn not to the right hand or to the left; whereas, if either be wanting, there is a wide gape, at which we will readily fall into the mire.—But more particularly,

1. They keep the soul from splittting on rocks on both hands. We are in this world as on a sea, therefore had need to take care. The way we pass is beset with two dangerous rocks; one on the left, despair, where thousands split; another on the right, presumption, where ten thousands have been shipwrecked; some fall on them in a dead calm, they are fearless and careless, and ere they are aware they dash on the rock of presumption, and go to the bottom; Job xxi. 13, "They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave." To others a storm arises, they are tossed, grow hopeless, and then split on the rock of despair. Whereas holy fear would carry us safe by the one, and kindly hope by the other, whatever storms blow: "Which hope," says Paul, "we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the vail," Heb. vi. 19.

2. They keep the heart in a due mean between carnal security and torturing anxiety. Holy fear keeps men awake, while fearless souls are sleeping within the sea-mark of wrath, not knowing when a wave may come and sweep them away. They may be saying, like the rich man, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine rest; eat, drink, and be merry. But God may then say, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee," Luke xii. 19, 20. Kindly hope composes the heart, and calms the disturbed spirit, while others destitute of it are tormenting themselves. Fear keeps from soaring too high, hope from sinking too low.

3. They keep notably to the duty of praying, which is necessary in all cases, and is a messenger often to be sent to heaven, especially in times of trouble: Psalm l. 15, "And call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Fear stirs up to the duty, hope draws to it. Fear fills the soul with reverence for God, and makes it to be in deep earnest in its addresses; hope guards it against terror and confusion in its applications to the throne. Fear caries off presumptuous confidence; but hope makes it hang upon mercy and grace.

4. They help on patience and resignation to the will of God, without which no man is master of himself: Luke xxi. 19, "In your your patience possess your souls." Hope looks for better things, a calm after a storm; fear tells us, such a stroke, ill carried, may bring on a worse. Thus the soul is in a holy manner both flattered and frightened into contentment with its lot. Thus it is kept from despising the chastening of the Lord, which many do, with their natural courage, and from fainting under his rebukes, as weak-hearted ones are liable to.

Lastly, They arm us on every hand against our adversary the devil: James iv. 7, "Submit yourselves therefore to God; resist the devil, and he will flee from you." There are two things, one of which the devil drives at continually: Either, (1.) To go forward with all ease in the way of sin; for, says the liar, there is no hazard; and thus whole shoals of sinners go on to the pit. But the fear of God will repel this temptation. Or, (2.) Not to offer to return to God, or go to Christ; for, says the murderer, there is no hope. But the kindly hope repels this. By this last he attacks the awakened sinner, and by the former the secure one. Whatever be your case, then, get your souls possessed of this kindly hope and holy fear. Beware of quitting either hope or fear. Are you at ease, and your hope great? O balance it with fear, lest having too much sail without ballast, ye suddenly be overcast and overwhelmed. Are you in trouble, and your fears great? O buoy up your souls with hope, lest ye sink altogether. For motives, consider,

1. The want of any of them makes you a prey to your grand enemy, 1 Peter v. 8, "Be sober, be vigilant, for your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist stedfast in the faith." Whichever of the avenues of the soul stand open, the enemy will enter by it; and once he get in, you know not what havoc he may make there. Are you fearless? he will have his snares fitted for that case. Are you hopeless? be sure he will take his advantage of it.

2. The safety of the soul in this sinful and ensnaring world depends on your entertaining both. The mariner may easier sail the ocean without his compass, the blind man go over his heights and depths without his guide, than you go through this world without these; for the worst that can befal them is the death of the body, but your souls will be ruined.

Lastly, The want of either is highly dishonourable to God. Is there a God in heaven, and will you not fear him? Has his Son died to purchase hope to sinners? and has he declared in his word, that he would have you hope in and for his mercy, and will ye not

do it? Mal. i. 6, "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts." By the want of fear, you declare you value greatness; and by the want of hope, that you can put no trust in his word.—I come now,

IV. To shew what is that pleasure which the Lord takes in such.

1. He approves them in so doing. The Lord says, Thou didst well that it was in thine heart, though Satan may suggest it to be presumption, Psalm cxv. 11, "Ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord; he is their help and their shield." What God requires to be done, he will surely approve of when it is done, this he requires, and therefore will approve of it.

2. He accepts of them; he is well pleased with the persons that do so. The exercise of these graces is a piece of very acceptable service to God, which he takes off sinners' hands for Christ's sake, though it be attended with many imperfections. That unbelief which remains in the hearts of them that fear God, makes them suspect they will be very unwelcome to hope for good at the Lord's hand; but it is a mistake, for such exercise is very pleasing to the Lord.

3. The Lord delights in them that do so. Their name may be Hephzibah, for the Lord delighteth in them, as a father does in his child, who both fears him, and hopes for good at his hand.

(1.) The Lord delights in their persons. Jer. xxxi. 20, "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still, therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." They are accepted in the beloved; their fear carrying them to Christ, and their hope fixing them upon him as the storehouse of all blessings. Being covered with imputed righteousness, they are all fair and lovely in the eyes of the Lord, there is no spot in them, Song iv. 7.

(2.) He delights in their graces. Song iv. 16, "Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." Holy fear and hope are the fruits of his own Spirit in the souls of his people, that grow up there as in a garden, being watered with the dew of heaven. They are leading graces, which bring along with them a train of others, all tending to promote holiness in heart and life.

(3.) In their duties. Prov. xv. 8, "The prayer of the upright is his delight." Where the fear of the Lord has place, the duties of religion will get room; the soul will be afraid of neglecting to pay its due homage unto the Lord; and hope being joined thereto, will bring them to the Lord with expectation of good at his hand; and this is the Lord's delight.

(4.) In their company. Song v. 1, "I have come into my garden, my sister, my spouse." He loves to have them near him, hanging about his hand, conversing with him, receiving his word from his mouth, and making their requests known to him: Song ii. 14, "Let me see (says he) thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." The mighty God, who has his higher house in heaven, has the contrite spirit for his lower house.—I shall now proceed,

V. To confirm the doctrine of the text, or shew, that "the Lord taketh pleasure in those, whatever case they be in, who entertain a holy fear of him, with a kindly hope in his mercy,"—For this purpose, consider,

1. This is answerable and agreeable to the revelation of God's mind in his word, what he has made known of himself both in the law and in the gospel. The fear of God is the great purpose of the law, hope for his mercy through Christ is the great purpose of the gospel. The law was given in such an awful manner, as might fill sinners with the dread of the great Lawgiver; the gospel brings in the blessed hope to lost sinners, so that this fear and hope, answering the design of both, cannot miss of being very pleasing to God.

2. It glorifies God in his glorious perfections, discovered to us in the face of Jesus Christ. The great end of the gospel contrivance is, to shew the glory of God in Christ as in a glass: 2 Cor. iv. 6, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Now, the entertaining of these two, fear and hope, doth at once give him the glory of all these. Holy fear gives him the glory of his awful majesty, inflexible justice, infinite power and holiness; kindly hope gives him the glory of his free grace, mercy, love, and goodness: and the joining of these two together gives him the glory of his infinite wisdom, that hath found out the way to give vent to both in the sinners' case.

3. It is agreeable to the Spirit's work of grace on the soul, whereby the sinner is first cast down, and then lifted up. The Spirit of God coming to the elect soul, finds it secure, careless, and presumptuous, thinking itself "rich and increased in goods, and standing in need of nothing," Rev. iii. 17. The Spirit then discovers what a God, and what a law, the sinner has to do with, and so works this holy fear in the heart. When the soul is awakened, it is ready to despond; and the Spirit, by the doctrines of the gospel, works this hope. Thus the sinner comes and cleaves to Christ.

Lastly, The Lord is very gracious unto such. They are entertained with some off-fallings while they hang about his hand in the

ordinances and duties of religion: Psalm lxv. 4, "We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple." Yea, they are filled as with marrow and fatness; God makes known his secrets to them, even the secrets of his covenant: Psalm xxv. 14, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant." He shews them also the secrets of his word: Luke xxiv. 32, "And they said one to another, Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" Also the secrets of his works, and the dispensations of his providence. And at length they shall be admitted to the full fruition of him in a better world; they shall enter into the joy of their Lord, and be for ever with him.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

SERMON VIII.

PSALM cxlvii. 11,

The Lord taketh pleasure in those that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

HAVING, in the preceding discourse, briefly gone through the doctrinal part, it only remains, that, in the

VI. And last place, I make a practical improvement of the whole; in doing which, I propose to enlarge at considerable length, by adverting to the different parts of this subject.—I begin,

I. With an use of information. It informs us,

1. That God in Christ is full of good-will to poor sinners. Since he will have them thus to depend upon him as children on a father, fearing and hoping in him; he it is who will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth, 1 Tim. ii. 4. Is not this a plain proof that he hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth? Eccl. xviii. 13, and that their ruin is of themselves, if they should perish; that he does not cast them off that hang by him, nor cast them out that come unto him, John vi. 37.

2. That however prosperous and favourable our case be, we have ground to keep up a holy fear upon our spirits: "Happy is the man that feareth alway," Prov. xxviii. 14. Whether it be that our outward state in the world, or our spiritual state, be peaceful, easy, and prosperous, still there is ground to fear, for we are in hazard of offending God in it. There is no way so plain and even, but

we may stumble in it. Outward prosperity ruins many: "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them," Prov. i. 31. And even in a prosperous state of the soul, there is no safety in being secure and careless, for in the managing of that we are apt to offend: 2 Cor. xii. 7, "Lest I should be exalted above measure, through the abundance of the revelations, there was given unto me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." No paradise on the earth but the serpent may be found there; and if one were wrapt up to the third heavens, like Paul, they will bring back with them a corrupt heart, ready to give them a slip, or lead them astray. We are in danger of a heavy turn and sad change in our condition, we are "to serve God with fear, and rejoice with trembling," Psalm ii. 11. See how quickly David's prosperity was changed: Psalm xxx. 7, "Thou didst hide thy face and I was troubled." Job's condition, both temporal and spiritual, how suddenly was it changed? Sovereignty lifts up and casts down, and the anger of a jealous God may soon be stirred, so as to make a mighty overturn in one's condition; therefore we should not be "high-minded, but fear," Rom. xi. 20.

3. It informs us, that however low one's case be, there is still room for hope while here; therefore we should always entertain a kindly hope: Psalm xliii. 5, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? why art thou disquieted in me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance, and my God." One may yet be at his wits end with his difficulties, knowing of no outgate, but yet he may have ground of faith and hope, because—so great things have been done by our merciful God, as to raise us up. He made a world out of nothing, he has raised the dead, and particularly Christ, while the whole elect's sins lay as a grave-stone on him. What, then, hinders him to do a great work for us, when he has done a greater? In him we may trust that he will yet deliver us, 2 Cor. i. 10—Whatever our case be, we are not the first that have been in it, and delivered too in God's own way. Psalm xxii. 4, "Our fathers trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them." People are apt to say, Never one was in such case as theirs. But, "is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time which was before us," Eccl. i. 10; and suppose it were new, yet faith and hope in God are not in vain; for he has a new cure for a new case, Isa. xliii. 18, 19. Whatever our case be, can it be worse than a lost case? Luke xix. 10, "The Son of man came to seek and save that which is lost." Can it be worse than a self-destroying case? Hos. xiii. 9, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help." Can it be worse than a case in

itself quite hopeless, even as dry bones? Ezek. xxxvii. 11, 12, but even by the Spirit of the Lord these bones can be made alive.—It is not beyond the reach of the power of God. Gen. xviii. 14, "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" who can be so low, as that the everlasting arms cannot raise up? with God nothing is impossible. A word from heaven can make all things take a happy turn, for saying and doing are but one thing with God. God says to the sinner, Believest thou that I can do these things? If thou dost, there is a ground of kindly hope.—In a word, the covenant of promise reaches to, and includes mercy of all kinds, necessary to make us happy; so that we have not only God's power, but his will, to give us mercy in all cases held out to us in the word, if so be we will take his way of faith and hope.—From this subject there is,

II. An use of exhortation, in several branches.

1. Fear the Lord; get and entertain a holy fear of God in your spirits. The profane and licentious lives of some, the carnal and loose hearts of others, proclaim a general want of this, Psalm xxxvi. 1, "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes." But all fear of God is not a holy fear pleasing to God. There is a servile fear, and a filial fear. Not to the former, but to the latter, I exhort you.

Herewith some various difficulties and inquiries may arise, which we shall endeavour to answer, such as,

1. When is the fear of God only slavish? In answer to this take the following observations: The fear of God is only slavish,

(1.) When it ariseth only from the consideration of God's wrath as a just judge. This fear of God is to be found in the unconverted; they have the spirit of bondage again to fear, Rom. viii. 15; yea, in the devils, they believe and tremble, Jam. ii. 19; and if the conscience once be awakened, though the heart be not sanctified, this fear cannot miss to take place. It is a natural passion flowing from self-love and a sight of danger, which is so much the more vehement, in proportion as the danger apprehended is greater or smaller; nearer or more distant. One under this fear, fears God as the slave fears his master, because of the whip, which he is afraid of being lashed; he abstains from sin, not out of hatred of it, but because of the wrath of God annexed to it. An apprehension of God's heavy hand on him here, or of hell and damnation hereafter, is the predominant motive of his fear of God, whom he fears only as an incensed Judge, and his powerful enemy.

(2.) When it checks or kills the love of God. There is a fear opposite to the love of God, which by this very character is discovered to be base and servile: 1 John iv. 18, "There is no fear in

love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment." There is a necessary connection betwixt true fear and love, the one cannot be without the other; they are both links of the same chain of grace, which the Holy Spirit gives those whom he sanctifies; but slavish fear fills the heart with hard thoughts of God, and the more it prevails, the farther is the soul from the love of God.

(3.) When it drives the sinner away from God. Under its influence, Adam and Eve hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God, and Cain went out from his presence. All the graces of the Spirit, as they come from the Lord, so they carry the sinner back to him; so no doubt it is an ungracious fear of God that frights the sinner away from him; for they that seek and return to him, will fear him and his righteousness. This fear hath this effect in different degrees, and the higher the worse:—It takes heart and hand from persons in their approaches to God, 1 John iv. 18, quoted already; it kills them before the Lord, knocks all confidence and hope in God on the head, so that their hearts at duty are like Nabal's—dying within them, and become as a stone; so when they should run for their life, it cuts the sinews of their endeavours; when they would wrestle for the blessing, it makes their knees feeble, and their hands hang down.—It makes them first averse to duty, and then give up with it; they deal with God as one with his avowed enemy, into whose presence he will not come, Gen. iii. 8. The people of God have sometimes had a touch of this, 2 Sam. vi. 9, "And David was afraid of the Lord that day, and said, How shall the ark of the Lord come unto me? Though it never prevails with them to extinguish love, yet sometimes a believer is like a faulty child, who, instead of humbling himself before his parents, hides himself in some corner, and is so frighted, that he dare not come in, and look the parent in the face; but this is a most dangerous case, especially if it lasts long.—In a word, it makes them run to physicians of no value. For what is more natural than that men who are frightened from God under apprehended danger, run to some other quarter, and that to their own ruin, Rev. vi. 16, "And said to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb."

2. What is to be thought of this slavish fear of God? To this I answer, there is something good in it, and something evil.

(1.) There is something good in it, namely, the fear of God's wrath for sin, which lies unpardoned on the guilty sinner or which the sinner may be inclined to commit: Jam. ii. 19, "Thou believest that there is one God, thou dost well." To cast off fear of the wrath of God, and the terrible punishments which he has annexed to sin, is a pitch of wickedness which but the very worst of

men arrive at. The fear of God's wrath against sin, and that duly influential too, is recommended to us by Christ himself, Luke xii. 5, "Fear him," says he, "which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell, yea, I say unto you, Fear him." It is also recommended by the example of the very best of saints, Job xxxi. 23, "For destruction from God was a terror unto me;" and says David, "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments," Psalm cxix. 120. And the law of God is not fenced with terrors to be disregarded, but to awe men's spirits. But,

(2.) There is something evil in it, yea, much evil in it, if we consider,—The scrimpness and narrowness of its spring. Why should the fear of God be confined to spring up from his wrath against sin only or chiefly, since there are so many other perfections of God, which may give rise to the fear of him, which are disregarded by this means? It casts a vail of disrespect on his holiness, goodness, and hatred of sin, on his relations of Creator, Preserver, Father, Supreme Lord, and Governor of the world.—The horrible effects and tendency thereof, as it rises only from this spring, and overflows all the banks of godly fear. Fear of God, even of his wrath, is good, but the excess of it is very bad. Fire and water are both good and necessary, but very bad when the one burns man, and the other drowns him. Hence, since what is acceptable in the sight of God is perfect in parts, though not in degrees, is good in the manner as well as matter, this fear is not what he takes pleasure in, nay, it is displeasing to him, and is the sin of those who hear the gospel, whose fear ought to be extended according to the revelation made to them. And thus one may be displeasing to himself, to those about him, and to God also; and if they attain to no other fear of God, what they fear will probably come upon them. Nevertheless, this fear, kept within bounds, may, by the Spirit, be made the means to bring the sinner to the Lord in his covenant. For the fear of God's wrath is a good thing in itself, Rom. viii. 15; it serves to rouse the sinner out of his security, to make him sensible of his danger, and to seek for relief: Psalm ix. 20, "Put them in fear, O Lord, that the nations may know themselves to be but men." And therefore the law and its threatening, as a red flag, are displayed in the sight of secure sinners, that they may be roused to flee from the wrath to come.

To this there may be offered this objection, The fear of the Lord's wrath can make but an unsound closing with the Lord in his covenant. Answ. That is very true, if there be nothing more. But fear of God's wrath not only may, but ordinarily, if not always does, begin the work which love crowns. Fear brings men to the gates of the city of refuge, and when they are there, love is kindled, and

makes them press forward. Fear brings the poor captive woman to confer with the conqueror about the match; but thereby love is kindled, and faith makes the match. It works, however, very differently at other times; for Satan and our corrupt hearts are ready to drive forward this fear of God's wrath to exceed all bounds; and no wonder, for when it has got over the boundaries, it makes fearful havoc in the soul's case, like a consuming fire, deadening all good motions towards God, and quickening evil ones, to the dishonour of God, and one's own torment; and no case out of hell is liker hell than this, both in respect of sin and misery. But when the Spirit of God has a saving work in view, he can easily make the spirit of bondage subservient to the spirit of adoption.

3. How should one manage in the case of a slavish fear of God's wrath? Here I answer, We had need to be well guided, for the losing or winning of the soul depends upon it. For your assistance I offer the following directions:—

(1.) Labour to clear the grounds of your fear of God's wrath, by a rational inquiry and discovery. There are, even of these fears, some that do really proceed from a bodily distemper vitiating the imagination, namely, from melancholy, and the like; and in this case, your trouble rises and falls according to the disposition of your bodies, but not according to the comfort or terror you receive from God's word, as it is in truly spiritual troubles. Thus it often comes on, and goes off, they know not how; shewing the first wound to be in their head, not in their conscience. Of this sort was the evil spirit Saul was troubled with, under which he got ease by music, not by his Bible. In this case, as well as others, it would be of use to consider the real grounds of fear from the Lord's word, and the consideration of one's own state or case, and so to turn it as much as may be into solid fears upon plain and evident reasons for it. This would be a step to the salvation of the soul. But, alas! it is sad to think of tormenting fear kept up on we know not what grounds, and which can produce no good; while in the meantime people will not be at pains to enquire into the real evidences of their soul's hazard, the sinfulness of their state, heart, and life. Ask, then, yourselves, what real ground there is from the Lord's word for this fear of yours.

(2.) Beware of casting off the fear, dread, and awe of the wrath of God against sin: Job xv. 4, "Yea, thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God." This is the issue of some people's fears, who, one way or other, get their necks from under the yoke, and grow more stupid, fearless, and profane, than even by the just judgment of God. It is true, that fear is not enough; but there is

something to be added, and yet not this fear cast away. If thou be brought into a state of sonship to God, the dread of God's wrath against sin will come along with you, though it will be no more slavish; as if a slave were made his master's son by adoption, he would still fear his anger, though not slavishly as before. But be one's state what it will, better be God's slave, fearing his wrath only, than the devil's freeman, casting off the fear of God altogether. There is less ill in the former than in the latter. Yea,

(3.) Cast not off the fear of that wrath, even its overtaking you, till such time as thy soul be brought away freely to Jesus Christ: Hos. v. 8, "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence; in their affliction they will seek me early." Thou hast no warrant to cast it off sooner, for certainly wrath is pursuing thee, till thou be within the gates of the city of refuge; and to be without fear of that wrath that is still advancing on a person, is ruining. Indeed, as soon as thou hast sincerely come to Christ in his covenant, though the fear of wrath against sin is never to be laid by, yet then thou mayest and oughtest to cast off the fear of vindictive wrath overtaking thee: "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," Rom. viii 1.

(4.) Look not always on an absolute God, for surely that can produce no fear of God but a slavish one; but look on God in Christ as the trysting-place himself has set, for receiving the addresses of the guilty on a throne of grace: 2 Cor. v. 19, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." This is the way to repress and curb the horrible effects of slavish fear, to make love to God, faith, and hope, spring up in the soul, and so mould that fear of thine into filial fear and reverence. In a God out of Christ thou canst discern nothing but inflexible justice, and the utmost terror; and from his throne of unvailed majesty, hear nothing but terrible voices, thunders, and earthquakes. But in a God in Christ thou mayest behold bowels of mercy, and flowing compassions; and from the throne of grace hear the still small voice of mercy and peace, Isa. xxxv. 3, 4.

(5.) At what time soever you find the fear of God's wrath begin to choke the love of God in your hearts, or to drive you away from him in any way, check and curb that fear resolutely, let it not proceed, though you were in the time under the most atrocious sin: Psalm lxv. 3, "Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou wilt purge them away." For then you are in the march between God's ground and the devil's; and there is a wind from hell, blowing up the fire of fear, that will consume you, if it be not quenched; for the separation of the soul from God, and its

going away from him, can in no case fail to be of a ruining nature: and the more that it increases with a person, his heart will be the more hardened, and he will be set the farther off from repentance.

(6.) Greedily embrace any gleam of hope from the Lord's own word, and hang by it. Ye should do like Benhadad's servants, and say, We have heard that the king of Israel is a merciful king, and we hope he will save us, 1 Kings xx. 31. The apostle calls hope the Christian's head-piece, 1 Thess. v. 8, not to be thrown away in a time of danger.

Lastly, Come away resolutely to the Lord Jesus, lay hold on him in the gospel-offer, and consent to the covenant: Heb. vii. 25, "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." Lay hold on the horns of this our altar, and you shall not die; he will swallow up death in victory, Isa. xxv. 8. Flee into this city of refuge; the avenger shall not overtake thee. Do as the lepers of Samaria did, reasoned with themselves, and went to the camp, where meat was to be found. Thou art like to sink in a sea of wrath, Jesus holds out his hand to draw thee ashore. Thou art afraid, perhaps, it is not to thee, it is vain to try; but know that it is the hand that must take thee out, or thou art a gone man; neglecting to take hold, thou art ruined; otherwise, thou canst be but ruined.

4. When is the fear of the Lord holy, filial, and reverential, such as the Lord takes pleasure in?—For your satisfaction in this inquiry, I would answer,

(1.) When the chief spring of it is not our own harm, but God's infinite excellence and perfection striking an awe upon the soul: Gen. xxviii. 17, "And Jacob was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and the gate of heaven." On this account, God was called the fear of the holy patriarchs, while in the world, Gen. xxxi. 42. Thus ingenuous children fear their parents, not because of the ill they may do them, but because of that authority and superiority they have over them.—When the soul is awed into a profound reverence for God, by the consideration of his transcendent excellence in all things, this is a becoming or true filial fear.

(2.) When the offending of God is feared as the greatest evil. A graceless man may fear the punishment of swearing, but a righteous man feareth an oath, Eccl. ix. 2; the former may fear the threatening as the greatest evil, but the righteous feareth the commandment, and shall be rewarded, Prov. xiii. 13. What would the most of the world fear about sin, if they were secured against wrath? Nothing. But the fearer of God, his great fear would remain notwithstanding, viz. the displeasing of his gracious Father.

(3.) When fear of his wrath is joined with a kindly affection and love to him, Psalm xc. 11—13. No man fears God who has not a dread of his anger, and the more grace, the more of this dread; so that a godly man will fear a frown of his face more than another a stroke of his hand. But withal this does not straiten the heart, but enlarge it in love to him; for these perfections of God that are the most proper objects of fear, are beautiful and lovely in the eyes of a saint; and therefore under the effects of his anger, they condemn themselves and justify God.

Lastly, When the fear of God draws the sinner to God, and makes him cling to him, Hos. iii. 5, "They shall seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days." As if he had said, They shall fear away to the Lord, like a good-natured child under fear of his parent running away to him, and catching hold of him; the language of which is, Any thing but separation from my holy Father. Holy fear also keeps the soul with the Lord, Jer. xxxii. 40, "I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me," and that upon the same principle.

5. How doth this fear work in the gracious soul? To this question I answer, Holy fear is an influential grace, diffusing its influence through the whole man, and therefore all religion is often comprehended under the name of the fear of God.

(1.) It makes God's verdict of things in his holy law the man's complete standard. In matters of faith, it causes him believe that God has said it; in matters of practice, to do or forbear, because God has bid or forbid it, though his own reason and all the world should contradict, Prov. iii. 7, "Be not wise in thine own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil." Holy fear awes the soul into implicit compliance with all that an incomprehensible God makes known in his word. So was Abraham brought to offer his son, and the fear of God carried him over all obstructions, Gen. xxii. 12.

(2.) It awes the soul into abstaining from such sins as there is no other awe-band against. There are some cases of temptation, wherein there is nothing from any creature to marr compliance with it, the way is quite clear on that part. But then the fear of God will be a sufficient restraint. Sometimes thou mayest have a fair occasion to wrong thy neighbour, and there is no fear of his knowing thou didst it; but if thou fearest God, thou darest not for thy soul do it, more than if all the world were looking on thee, Lev. xix. 14, "Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling-block before the blind, but shalt fear thy God, I am the Lord." Sometimes occasions for sin occur, and men will bear thee out in the sin-

ful practice; but if thou fearest God, thou darest not do it, more than if all the world should conspire to hinder thee, Job xxxi. 21—23. Holy Providence lays such occasions before men for their trial.

(3.) It awes the soul into compliance with duties, even such as one has no other thing to drive him to, Eccl. xii. 13, "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." Holy fear reverenceth the authority of God, not only in abstaining from sin, but in complying with duties, Deut. vi. 13, "thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him." Those who have no inward principle to set them on their duty, have no fear of God before their eyes. But that principle will carry a man to duty, over the belly of opposition and contradiction, from Satan, an evil world, and the corrupt reasonings of one's own heart.

(4.) It makes one mainly fear the offence of God in the commission of sin, and omission of duties. The great care of a fearer of God is, lest he depart from God, Jer. xxxii. 40; holy fear and love are always joined, and therefore he that truly fears God, hates sin, and loathes it, because God hates it, Prov. viii. 13, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil." He loves his duty because it is pleasing in the Lord's sight; whereas others hate sin for fear of wrath, and only love duty for the sake of the reward. It suffers not the soul to rest in any degree of holiness already attained, but spurs it on towards perfection: 2 Cor. vii. 1, "Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." As Noah's fear made him not only begin the ark, but advance the work till it was perfected, so this holy fear still works against sin, till the soul be out of hazard; and that is not till death. Truce with sin, or indulging lusts, say either there is no fear of God in the heart, or that it is asleep; for in whatsoever measure one fears God, he will stand at a distance from sin, and seek the destruction of his corruptions.

Lastly, It carries the man to his duty, over the belly of the fear of man or any other creature, Matth. x. 28, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul." If one be in hazard of being frightened from his duty, by the fear either of devils or of men, there is no antidote like the fear of God, 1 Pet. iii. 14, "But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be ye troubled;" for as the light of the sun removes the light of a glow-worm, that shines only in the dark, so the fear of God banisheth other fear in the point of duty to the Lord.

I shall now add a few motives to influence the study of this filial fear; such as,

1. Infinite greatness and goodness meet together in him, and in him only, and therefore it is his due, Jer. x. 7, "Who would not fear thee, O king of nations, for to thee doth it appertain." His glorious and unspeakable perfections entitle him to it, and it cannot be denied him without the highest sacrilege. Nay, men must needs be strangers to him who do not fear him; for no sooner does the creature know him, but it must fear him; the sight of his greatness without his goodness, will produce a terror: but the sight of both, a holy reverence.

2. The relations requiring reverence of us meet together in him; and the truth is, we owe no reverence to any, but as they do in some sort, by the eminence they stand in, represent God whom we are to fear above all, and to fear in them. A reverential fear is due to our superiors, but God is the Supreme Being. We owe it to those who are superior to us in office and dignity, Rom. xiii. 7, "Render therefore unto all their due, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour." God is the supreme Governor of the world. Is the servant to reverence his master, the child his parents, the wife her husband? surely then God, who is the ancient of days, who stands to his people in such endearing relations, is to be feared by them, Psalm xlv. 11, "He is thy Lord, and worship thou him."

3. It is our wisdom to fear God, Psalm cxi. 10, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." O sinner! wouldst thou be wise indeed? then fear God; it is the beginning of wisdom. A man never begins to be wise till the fear of God enters his heart. He goes on in folly and madness till he get this ballast to his soul; he is frisking about the pit's mouth, in hazard every moment of falling down, till the awe of God strikes his soul.—It is the chief point of wisdom; all the wisdom of the world is but folly in comparison of this. Wisdom teaches men to fear dangers, losses, and the like, but what avails it all, if men fear not the offending of God, and the loss of the soul.

4. It is in some sort the whole of religion, Job iv. 6, "Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways?" for it is the sum and substance of religious duties, which therefore are comprehended under that name in many parts of the Bible, and it has an universal influence over the whole of religion, drawing it all after it in the special parts thereof: for when it once gets place, it will bring in every known duty, and set the soul at a distance from all known sin.

5. It would free you of other fears that are tormenting, in whatever degree it gets place in your hearts. Fear of men and devils

is so entertained by many, that it becomes a tormenting passion, frighting them out of the way of duty to God. This is the first expedient to get rid of these. Allow the great God his own room in the heart, and let him be thy fear and thy dread, and so the creature will prove contemptible in comparison of him.

6. Consider the precious promises made to, and the benefits bestowed on those that fear the Lord. If thou be a fearer of God, go matters as they will, with thee it shall be well; Eccl. viii. 12, 13, "Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days are prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him; but it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, because he feareth not before God," It prolongs men's days, in so far as it keeps them in the way of holiness, Prov. x. 27; see a cluster of promises, Psalm xxv. 12—14; compare Prov. xix. 23, and Psalm xxxiv. 9, which you may read at your leisure.

Lastly, The want of the fear of God is an infallible sign of a wicked, graceless heart; it looses the reins to wickedness of heart and life, and so betrays men into ruin, Psalm xxxvi. 1—4, "These that fear not God now, will be made to fear him hereafter, when there shall be no escaping out of the hand of their terrible Judge.

Some may say, O! how shall I attain to this holy fear of God? With a view to promote this attainment, I would offer the following directions:—

1. Labour to know God, who and what he is, 1 Kings viii. 43, "That all people of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee, as do thy people Israel." It is a benefit of the second covenant, to know the Lord, Hos. ii. 20, "I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord." God, to the most of the world, is like a prince in disguise amongst his subjects, they treat him rudely because they do not know him; an unknown God will not be feared. While ignorance of God reigns in the heart, there is no place for holy fear; for that will make men count darts as stubble, and laugh at the shaking of the spear.

2. Stir up in your hearts a desire to fear him; it is a token for good, when one is willing to entertain the fear of God, Neh. i. 11, "Thy servants who desire to fear thee." This desire hath the promise, and it will be accompanied with suitable endeavours after it. Many fight against the fear of God, that they may live at ease, and may be able to give themselves loose reins to their sinful practices; no wonder their hearts be hardened from it. And hence, if at any time they be taken with the fear of God, they do what they can to be freed of it, as they would pluck out arrows out of their flesh.

3. Take God for your God in Christ, and devote yourselves to him. The God we choose for our God, we will fear; Mic. iv. 5, "For all people will walk every one in the name of his God, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever." And so, when men set up their idols of jealousy in the Lord's room, these get the fear that is due to God. So the worldling fears his clay god, his life is in its smiles, and its frowns are his death. But take the Lord for your God, I say, in Christ; for no otherwise he offers himself to us in the covenant, 2 Cor. v. 19. This is the way to holy fear: For, (1.) It is a promised benefit of the covenant, Jer. xxxii. 40, "I will put my fear in their hearts." Whoever comes into God's covenant of grace, the fear of God is, by the holy Spirit, stamped upon their hearts, whereby it may be known that they belong to God as children; and they devote themselves, on the other hand, to his fear, Psalm cxix. 38. They are his servants, devoted to his fear. They give themselves to it, and make it their great study. (2.) This covenant is a covenant of peace and friendship betwixt God and the guilty creature, through a Mediator, Heb. xii. 22—24, so that thy state is changed, the moment that thou comest into the covenant, from enmity to peace with God, Eph. ii. 19, they become fellow-citizens with the saints, and are of the household of God. This happily joins love and dread of God together, producing holy fear and reverence of God; whereas while God is apprehended certainly as an enemy to us, fear him we may with slavish fear, but not with holy fear, since we cannot love him.

4. Be much in the exercise of repentance. Sorrowing after a godly sort for sin, as it dishonours God, is offensive to his majesty, separates the sinner from God, and exposes the soul to his anger, is the ready way to produce holy fear for the time to come, 2 Cor. vii. 11. Yea, what fear, says Paul, namely as the effect of sorrow after a godly sort; they that are burnt dread the fire; and they that feel the bitterness of sin, will fear God, and stand at a distance from it. The looking into our frightful acts of sin, will awe our hearts with a dread of the offended Majesty, and make us fall down, saying, "Forgive us our debts."

5. Pray for it earnestly as a promised benefit of the covenant, and join thereto a faith of particular confidence: Matth. xxi. 22, "And all things whatsoever ye shall ask, believing ye shall receive them." Beg of God that he would manifest himself to you, so as ye may be filled with holy fear of him. Ye may read and hear much of God, and little impressions be made on your spirits by it at all; but when the Lord discovers himself to the sinner, his own glorious light will so represent him as the soul cannot choose but

both love and fear him: Job xlii. 5, 6, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee: Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

Lastly, Draw together the scattered affections and faculties of the soul, and set them on the Lord: Psalm lxxxvi. 11, "Unite my heart to fear thy name." As the scattered rays of the sun will not burn, till they be collected by a burning glass; so the heart, walking at random, will not be filled with holy fear. Withdraw your hearts from pursuing vanities, and gadding after idols, and labour to see the Lord in those glasses where we may perceive how he is to be feared.

I would urge you to look to him particularly, (1.) In the glass of his word. See how he is there represented as one worthy to be feared: Psalm lxxxix. 7, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." O with what awful solemnity may we hear him there speaking of himself, his saints speaking of him and to him! and the angels also, with their vailed faces, crying, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. Had we eyes to discern his voice in his word, every page would fill our hearts with profoundest reverence. See him, (1.) In the shining holiness of his commandments, perfectly pure from all earthly dross; and when thus seen, how can the sinful creature not fear him! Exod. xv. 11, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" He appears there to be all light, and that in him there is no darkness at all. The holy, spiritual, and extensive law, may fill our hearts with the dread of the Lawgiver, of whose nature it is a transcript. See him, (2,) In the amazing sovereignty of his threatenings. This filled good Josiah with fear, 2 Kings xxii. 19; and Hab. iii. 16. Behold thence flames of wrath flashing out on the faces of impenitent sinners. All the threats of men own death to be their utmost; and, O! how will a threat of death fright mortals! But the Lord's threatenings go beyond death, and carry the matter to an endless eternity. See him, (3.) In the unspeakable riches of his gospel-promises displayed in the word. His terrors are no more severe on the one hand, than his promised encouragements are great on the other. If hell be in the one scale, heaven is in the other. Who would not, therefore, fear him?—Look to him,

2. In Christ, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person. See God in Christ, and there see an object of fear and love in one. If ye would be stirred up to fear God, look to Mount Calvary, and there behold Christ groaning, and dying on a

cross for the sins of an elect world, and you will see three awful sights. (1.) The severity of God's justice against sin, not sparing his own Son, Rom. viii. 32. Many terrible instances have there been of this, in the deluge, and the like. But what is the tumbling down of sinful angels into the pit, the deluging of a world, the burning of Sodom,—to the Son of God dying on a cross, and bearing his Father's wrath? O! if this was done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? (2.) The channel of mercy and grace, in which they flow to guilty sinners. It is by the Mediator's stripes we must be healed; the sinner's life comes in the way of Christ's death; no mercy, no grace, but through the wounds of a Redeemer. There was love from eternity in the breast of God towards an elect world, but Justice stood in the way of Mercy's getting through to the criminals; a way was then made by the blood of the Son of God. (3.) The price of pardon, 1 Pet. i. 19, the precious blood of Christ; no pardon, but what is the price of blood, and that blood of infinite value; that is the ransom which had to be given for the captives, or they could never have been set free. O! who can see these, and not fear this awful and tremendous majesty thus appearing!—Look at him,

3. In the glass of his adorable perfections. How small a portion do we know of him! but there is nothing which we have manifested to us concerning him, but may contribute to this holy fear. On the one hand, consider his infinite power, whereby he can do all, and his universal dominion, whereby he may do what he will: Job xxxvii. 23, 24, and xxv. 2; his justice, holiness, omniscience, omnipresence, infinite veracity and truth, whereby all he has said shall be made good to a tittle. Who, then, can but fear him?—Consider, on the other hand, his mercy, his love, grace, and goodness, which are so unbounded and unspeakable! Who, then, can but fear him?—Look at him,

Lastly, In the glass of his works. Look to his works of creation, Psalm xix. 1. Does not the earth and heaven, with all their glorious furniture, cry aloud to us to fear this God. Look to his works of providence: Jer. v. 22, "Fear ye not me? saith the Lord; will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass?" His managing of the world challenges our fearing of him. (1.) His mercies with which we are loaded, call us to reverence him as our great benefactor, Jer. v. 24. (2.) His judgments; his judgments, in particular, against ourselves, Luke xxiii. 40; and against others, which we may every where discern: Psalm cxix. 118.—120, "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments."

Every stroke laid on in this world is fitted to create a fear of him in our hearts. His general judgment, that is to come, the serious view of which must needs strike sinners with fear: 1 Pet. i. 17, "And if ye call on the Father, who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." See also Eccl. xii. 13, 14.

II. I would now earnestly exhort you to "hope in the Lord for his mercy." Entertain a holy hope in God in all cases. For clearing of this, we must know, that hope in general is an inclination to, and expectation of good possible to be had, but not without some difficulty. As hope is conversant about divine things, or the mercy of God, it is of two sorts, holy hope, and presumptuous hope; the one well-grounded, the other ill-grounded. Here, therefore, also, some inquiries may be proposed, which we shall endeavour to answer; such as,

I. What is the true hope for mercy, which the Lord takes pleasure in? ANSW. It is a certain expectation of attaining the mercy, which faith believes, grounded on God's grace and faithfulness.

(1.) For the kind of it; it is an expectation of mercy to be attained. Hope looks always on its object as future: Rom. viii. 24, "For we are saved by hope. But hope that is seen is not hope. for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" This is a main difference between faith and hope, faith looking always on its object as present in the promise, for "faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." And hope is a certain expectation of it, not so much in itself, (for true hope may be attended with much doubting, Lam. iii. 18), as in the event, for it will never fail the party that has it, nor put him to shame by disappointment, for it hangs on faith: Rom. v. 5, "And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost given unto us.

(2.) For the object of this hope; it is mercy which is hoped for. Now, there is a threefold mercy hope looks for. (1.) The mercy of eternal life itself: Jude 21, "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." This is the chief thing the believer is to hope for, and he may, with the utmost certainty and confidence, expect it, 2 Tim. i. 12. This hope, even the hope of salvation, the apostle will have the Christian to put on as an helmet, 1 Thess. v. 8, and even to stretch forth his hope over death and the grave. (2.) The mercy necessary to bring us to eternal life; as perseverance therein to the end, notwithstanding all the difficulties that are in the way: Rom. viii. 38, "And we know, that all things work together for good to them that

love God, and are the called according to his purpose." Though the grace of God in him be like a spark of fire in an ocean, he ought firmly to hope, that the same heavenly breath that kindled it will keep it in to the end. (3.) The mercy of all other good things, so far as God shall see the bestowing them on us for his own glory, and our good. There are many particular things good in themselves, which we know not whether they will be so to us or not; for example, deliverance from such a trouble; therefore it is not to be absolutely hoped for, but under this qualification, that God sees it to be good for us.

(3.) For the antecedent of this hope: that is faith, which is the evidence of things hoped for, Heb. xi. 1. There can be no true hope without faith; where faith does not open the door, hope cannot enter. Faith embraces the mercy in the promise of God, and hope waits for the accomplishment of the promise; so that one cannot truly hope for that which God has not promised, neither can one hope for the accomplishment of that promise which faith does not believe.

Lastly, The ground of this hope is God's free grace in Christ and his faithfulness: 1 Pet. i. 13, "Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, and hope to the end, for the grace which is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." The mercy promised is quite above the sinner's deserving; but he considers the fulness and freedom of God's grace, and withal how unalterable he is to his word, and therefore hopes upon having that word made good to him.

A *second* question is, How may the hope of mercy be known to be presumptuous? Answ. Presumption is the soul-ruining plague, whereby a person assumes to himself what God has, by no testimony of his word, declared to be his, and which alters the beautiful order of mercy established by God, joining together what God has separated, and separated what he has joined.—Upon this I observe,

(1.) That hope is presumptuous, which is not founded on the Lord's word. Such hope is brisk in the dark, but loses all its lustre by the light of God's word brought in upon it: John iii. 20, 21, "For every one that doth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved; but he that doth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." God's word is a friend unto his grace, but an enemy to delusion; it is the touch-stone that discovers the true metal and also the counterfeit. You hope for salvation, in what word of God is your hope founded? Does the Lord's word, searchingly applied, strengthen or weaken your hope? Say you, The general invitations are the ground of my hope? These may be grounds of hope that ye may get eternal life, if you will take God's

way: but do you not hope that you shall get it, without a due consideration of this? Now, these can never be the grounds of a solid hope, for all that hear the gospel are comprehended in these, as well as you.

(2.) That hope is presumptuous, which overlooks and neglects the means appointed by God for the attaining of his mercy unto eternal life: 1 Pet. i. 3, "We are begotten by God to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." The way thou art to be happy for ever is, that thou be united to Christ by a true faith, that thou be a new creature, that thou lead a holy life. Dost thou neglect these, and yet hope all will be well? Thy hope is presumption, and will ruin thee, Deut. xxix. 19, 20.

Lastly, That hope is presumptuous, which is built without erasing the old foundation, Luke xxxiv. 48. Many have hopes of heaven which grow up with themselves, they were never shaken out of themselves, nor had the naughtiness of their hopes discovered, and so never were led to Jesus Christ, to build on him by uniting with him.

A *third* enquiry may be, How may the hope of mercy be known to be true hope, which God will take pleasure in? In answer to this, it may be noticed,

1. True hope is founded on the free grace of God in Christ, 1 Pet. i. 13, quoted already. The scriptures are written for our learning that we, through patience and comfort of them, might have hope, Rom. xv. 4. Hope is not built upon our good dispositions, good works, external and common benefits which we enjoy, for these are but a sandy foundation, unable to bear this weight; but the anchor of hope is cast so as to fix upon the immoveable ground aforesaid, Heb. vi. 19. It is true holiness discerned by us in ourselves, as an evidence, that doth help us to a firm hope; but the stress of hope lies not upon it as a ground-work.

2. True hope is a lively principle of sanctification, 1 John iii. 3, "And every man that hath this hope purifieth himself, even as he (God) is pure;" and therefore it is called a lively hope, 1 Pet. i. 3. As a spring by degrees does work out the mud that is in a well, so hope of mercy does work out corruption; as the prospect of the marriage-day makes the parties to be taken up in preparing for the marriage, so the true hope of eternal life puts one to be preparing for it, Rev. xix. 7. That hope which suffers sin to lie untouched in heart and life, that does not put on a person to mortify sin, is a dead hope; and true hope carries to universal holiness, even as he is pure.

Lastly, It makes one diligent in the use of means appointed by

God, Heb. x. 23—25; but withal not to rest on the means, but on the Lord. To hope, without using the means appointed and required, is presumption; to rest on the means is a spice of atheism. But that is true hope, which makes the soul delight in all duties and ordinances, to leave no appointed means unessayed, in order to attaining the blessed end; and then, when all is done, to place all confidence of success on the Lord.

With a view to press this holy, lively hope, I would mention the following motives.

1. It is not only our comfortable attainment, but a duty required of all that believe, 1 Pet. i. 13, "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end." And therefore the apostle Paul presseth diligence in seeking after it in full measure, Heb. vi. 11, "And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end;" and he prays for it, Rom. xv. 13, "Now, the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." It is a duty that is in a special manner comfortable.

2. It is most necessary; hope is as necessary to a Christian, as a head-piece to a soldier in a battle, 1 Thess. v. 8; as necessary as an anchor to a ship, Heb. vi. 19; yea, so necessary, that we are said to be saved by it, Rom. viii. 24.

Lastly, It is a great friend to holiness, and perseverance in the ways of God, 1 Cor. xv. 58.—As it honours God's grace and goodness, so it strengthens the soul, and animates it to all duties, to fight against corruption and temptation, and to pursue holiness.

III. Let all be exhorted to entertain a holy fear of God, together with a holy hope for his mercy. Mix these, and balance your souls with them, whatever your case be. While you are going through the world, keep your course in the middle between the two rocks of presumption and despair.—For this purpose,

1. Beware of desponding or despairing of the mercy of God in Christ. There is an allowable despair, which all ought to entertain, in order to their getting their hope fixed on God, viz. a quitting of all hope in our own sufficiency, or ability to make ourselves happy by ourselves, or that ever we shall be well, while we continue in a state of black nature. But what we call despair is a giving over all hope in God, which is a horrible sin. There is a threefold despair you should beware of, as ye would not ruin your own souls.

(1.) A sensual despair, which ariseth from an excessive love of the profits and pleasures of this world, with a secure contempt of spiritual and external good in another world, 1 Cor. xv. 32, "Let

us," say they, "eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Alas! how many are there plagued with this? their souls are festered with the desire of present good, which is their all, and, having no hope of better after this life, they give the swing to their lusts after these.

(2.) A sluggish despair, Prov. xxii. 13, "The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets." Their sloth musters up difficulties to them, forming some that are groundless, imaginary ones, and aggravating real ones, so that they conclude beforehand that they will not be better, their endeavours will not succeed, and therefore they lie still, and will do nothing for their own help; this ruins many.

(3.) A sorrowful despair, which ariseth from strong fears, which raise such a mist in the soul, that grounds of hope in its case, are hid out of sight, and they are in their soul's case as in Acts xxvii. 20, neither sun nor stars for many days appear, no small tempest lies on them, and all hope that they shall be saved is then taken away. There are different degrees of this; sometimes it is silent and sullen, making little noise, but is smothered in one's breast like a burning fire. In such a case, one would do well to give it a vent before God, his servants, or godly experienced Christians, lest it ruin them. This is the way David took when in such a case, Psalm xxxix. 2.—4, "I was dumb with silence, I held my peace even from good, and my sorrow was stirred; my heart was hot within me; while I was musing, the fire burned, then spake I with my tongue, Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am." Sometimes it is raging as in Judas, who, under horror laid upon his sin, did miserably end his life.

Beware of all these, and resist the beginnings of despair, and if it has fastened on any soul, let them strive to quench it, as they would do a fire. The former makes way for the latter, and altogether makes way for remediless despair in hell. I shall only say two things of it.—(1.) It is defiling, and makes the soul most loathsome before God; for it conceives most basely and abominably of God and Christ, directly opposing itself to the grand design of the gospel; it blasphemes the power of God, and the efficacy of his Son's blood and Spirit. (2.) It is ruining, for it makes the sinner flee from God, and cast away the means of recovery, and so ensures their destruction; besides that it often drives the sinner to put an end to his torment here, by leaping into endless torments before the time, as in the case of Judas. And while we see how Satan is ready to take advantage, we had need to take heed.

2. Beware of presumption. Take heed that ye do not flee from

the one rock to dash on the other. Indeed, despair is tormenting, while presumption is easy. Nevertheless, though none of them is good, yet a person presuming is ordinarily in greater hazard than one despairing; for the presumptuous sees not his case as the other does: the one is well pleased with his damnable condition, the other is weary of his, and wishes to have it changed; so that many more perish by the one than by the other.

To conclude: Remember, on the one hand, God is a holy jealous God, who cannot away with sin, or a state of sin, but the fire of his jealousy burns against it. On the other hand, remember that the blood of Christ takes away all guilt, his Spirit overcomes the most hopeless case, and his mercy reaches wide for every condition. Fear him, ye that hope in him; hope in his mercy, ye that fear him; for "the Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy." Amen.

JESUS VICTORIOUS OVER DEATH.*

SERMON IX.

ISAIAH XXV. 8,

He will swallow up death in victory.

SUCH as are desirous duly to manage this solemn communion occasion, will have in their view the other world. We are all on a journey towards it, and, if suitably exercised, will improve this occasion to lay down our measures for eternity. Betwixt us and that other world, lies the great gulf of death; through it are two passages; one deep and devouring, where the sinner passes alone; there the waters flow with all that force and strength which they acquired by the breach of the covenant of works. By this passage, sinners are thrown out into the land of utter darkness and misery. The text shews us the other passage, which is shallow and safe, where the sinner passes on at the Mediator's back, the waters being dried up by the soles of his feet, whoso passeth this way, enters into Immanuel's land, the land of life; for "he will swallow up death in victory."

In these words, we have a prophecy of the happy success of a battle fought by the Mediator on account of elect sinners. The suc-

* Delivered Saturday, October 4, 1718.

cess is most certain; therefore it is in the Hebrew, "He hath swallowed up," &c.—Here consider,

1. The combatants; the two mightiest that ever encountered. Upon the one hand is death, with his devouring mouth, a champion who never yet could find his match among the children of men, till the great HE, in the text, entered the lists against him, even Jesus Christ, who being man, was capable of feeling the force of death; but being the Lord of hosts also, ver. 6, could not but be conqueror at length. So death and the Mediator are the combatants.—There is,

2. The encounter of the combatants, implied in these words, "He will swallow up death in victory." Death attempting to prey upon that elect world which was given to Christ by the Father, he, as Mediator, to pluck that prey out of death's devouring mouth, encounters the terrible enemy while he is making havock of poor sinners; and, having taken upon him the guilt of his elect, which gave death a power over them, death advances against him, and attacks him, and he abides the contest. No sooner was he born, than Death, mounted on his pale horse, advanced against him, and striking at him, filled Bethlehem with the blood of babes and the shrieks of parents. Though it could not then reach him the deadly blow, it pursued him still, shot out its poisonous arrows against him all along, till they came to a close engagement on the cross, where it wrestled him down even into the grave, the proper place of its dominion. So the Mediator got the first fall.

3. But behold the issue of the battle. Death, who in all other battles wins whatever party loses, loses the day here; the victory is on the side of the slain Mediator. The slain Saviour again revives, gets up upon death, stands conqueror over it, even in its own territories, breaks the bars of the grave, takes away the sting it fought with against him, and puts it and all its forces to the rout; so that it can never show its face against him any more, Rom. vi. 9, "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over him."

4. The Mediator's pursuit of the victory, till it be complete for these that are his, as well as for himself: "He will swallow up death in victory." The vanquished enemy has yet many strongholds in his hand, and he keeps many of the redeemed ones at under; some of them as prisoners, that they cannot stir; others of them though they can stir, yet can go nowhere, but they must drag the bands of death after them. But the Mediator will pursue the victory till he swallow up death, totally abolish it out of his kingdom, that there shall no more of it be seen there for ever, as a thing that is swal-

lowed up is seen no more at all; our Lord is cutting it down daily, and the last of it shall go over at the last day, 1 Cor. xv. 54, "So when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.—These words contain in them this

Doct. That our Lord Jesus, having fought death, and obtained the victory, will pursue the victory, till death be utterly abolished out of his kingdom.—Three things are here to be attended to.

I. The battle.

II. The victory.

III. The pursuit.—After which,

IV. I shall subjoin some practical improvement.

I. We shall consider the battle betwixt death and the Lord of life.—And,

1. Under what character has the Lord of life fought this battle? He fought it,

(1.) As the head and representative of the elect world, as their Mediator, who took burden on himself for all that the Father had given him; for otherwise he had nothing to do with death; nor had it any concern with him: John v. 15, "I lay down my life for the sheep." Adam, the head of all mankind, had betrayed us all into the snare of death, we were not able to break it, or to make our escape thence; but Christ undertook it for the elect, as their Head, and so sought death in their room and stead: 1 Tim. ii. 6, "Who gave himself a ransom for all." "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed," Isa. liii. 5. He bare what we should have borne, stood the shock which would have ruined us; he was wounded and bruised in this battle, but all for us. Ver. 8, "For the transgression of my people was he stricken." And hence we are reckoned in law to have died in him: Rom. vi. 10, 11, "For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

(2.) As their Redeemer and Deliverer: Hos. xiii. 14, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death: O death! I will be thy plagues; O grave! I will be thy destruction." By sin we fell a prey to devouring death, the broken law concluded us under the power of it. The prey could not be taken from this mighty one, without both price and power; so Christ

engaged with death, and by his death ransomed death's prisoners: Heb. ii. 15, "That through death he might destroy death, and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." He spoiled it of its power, that they might get free. The kingdom he had received of his Father could not be recovered, nor the captives set free, without stroke of sword, his overcoming death, that held them fast; therefore he fought the battle.

(3.) As a captain or general at the head of his people: Heb. ii. 10, "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." God has designed that the elect shall fight their way to heaven, and therefore has given them Christ as a leader and commander: Isa. lv. 4, "Behold I have given him for a leader and commander to the people." They must march through the Red Sea of death to the upper Canaan; but Christ goes before, drying up the waters. There are cords of death on the most lively believer, yet he must set himself to break them; but Christ has made them like a thread of flax, when it toucheth the fire. They must encounter the king of terrors; but the King of glory, marching in the front, has received all the deadly sting—I shall consider,

2. The attack made upon him by death. Death, finding the Mediator standing in sinners' stead, advances against him with all its forces, with which it was furnished by the breach of the first covenant; and, when managing this contest,

(1.) Death brings up its strength against him, that is, the law, 1 Cor. xv. 56, "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law," which, finding him a sinner by imputation, cut him down, Gal. iv. 4, "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." The law cries for justice against sin, and justice takes the Mediator by the throat, saying, Pay what thou owest; then he "restored what he took not away," Psalm lxix. 4. The law brings up against him a black band of curses, and pours into his soul: Gal. iii. 13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." It soon began to shoot its arrows against him. When he was born, he must be born in a stable, laid in a manger, for there was no room for him in the inn; persecution is raised against him in his infancy; he must be all along a man of sorrows, poor, not having where to lay his head; he is hungry, thirsty, weary, &c. At length the battle grows hotter, the heavens are black above his head; and in the garden, and on the cross, showers of arrows dipt in the curse fly at him. He sweats bloody

drops, falling down to the ground,—cries out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

(2.) Meanwhile he that has the power of death (Heb. ii. 14.) advances against him, Satan sets upon him in the wilderness with most grievous temptations, Matt. iv. Being beat back, he returns, and renews the assault: Luke iv. 13, "And when the devil had ended all the temptations, he departed from him for a season." At length the hour and power of darkness comes, and then the bands of hell exert their utmost vigour against him, storms from hell blow hard upon him, the fountains of the great deep are opened on him: John xiv. 30, "Hereafter I will not talk much with you, for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." Col. ii. 15, "And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

(3.) The congregation of men dead in trespasses and sins stir up themselves against him: Isa. liii. 3, "He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and we hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." Judas betrays him, the Jews gape on him like a lion, crying, Crucify him; Pilate condemns him; he is scourged, crowned with thorns, smitten on the crowned head, his body racked till it was all out of joint, nailed to the cross, hangs there mocked, and pierced with a spear.

(4.) Death comes with its sting upon him, and pierces him to the heart, and casts him down dead: 1 Cor. xv. 56, "The sting of death is sin:" this gives it the power of hurting any. The guilt of all the sins of the elect lay upon him, which could not but make the sting of death inexpressibly sharp and piercing. Thus a thousand deaths in one met together on him, for the Lord made the iniquities of us all to meet on him; and all the arrows that should have pierced all the elect for ever, have entered into his bowels; and, having fallen under death, he was carried prisoner to the grave.

II. Let us consider the victory Christ obtained. He tells us he has fought and overcome: Rev. iii. 21, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. Yea, he has triumphed over his enemies in his glorious ascension into heaven. Consider,

I. How this victory over death was obtained. It was obtained,

(1.) By his death. This was the decisive stroke: Heb. ii. 14, "That through death he might destroy death, and him that had the power of death." It was such a victory as Samson's last victory over the Philistines, when he pulled down the house, and

died himself with the Philistines in the fall of it; and therefore he cried upon the cross, "It is finished." Death has done its utmost and can do no more; by his death he satisfied the law in all it had to demand of him as the elect's Surety; he paid the debt, and removed the guilt. Sin being removed, and the law satisfied, death has no more that strength or sting wherewith to set upon him at first; and so it fell with him.

(2.) By his resurrection. Thereby he got up above death, which had lost its power, and could hold him no longer, Acts ii. 24, "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." He stood a conqueror in the grave, death's own quarters; he broke asunder its iron bars, and brought away its keys; behold they hang at his girdle, Rev. i. 18, "And have the keys of hell and of death." So death's dominion over those that are his, got an irrecoverable stroke, and he that had the power of death as to the elect, namely, as an executioner, viz. the devil, was also destroyed.—I next inquire,

2. What sort of a victory it is Jesus hath obtained over death?—It is,

(1.) A dear-bought victory, it cost the glorious Conqueror his precious life; he suffered the bruising of his heel, before the serpent's head could be got bruised. He suffered in his body, and also in his soul, to such a degree, that the holy human nature could not have borne up under it, had it not been supported by his divine nature.

(2.) A complete victory in respect of himself, though not yet complete in respect of his members: Rom. vi. 9, "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over him." Now he is beyond the reach of death and all his enemies, sitting at the Lord's right hand until he make his enemies his footstool, Psalm cx. 1.

(3.) A glorious victory, saints and angels singing the triumphant song. Hear the acclamations of joy and wonder with which he was met at his return from the battle, Isa. lxiii. 1, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with died garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." What a glorious victory was it which he obtained over the king of terrors, who subdues the most potent armies, overcomes the conquerors of the earth; but behold the great spoiler spoiled, the conqueror conquered by the King of glory.

(4.) An everlasting victory. Now death's power is irrecoverably broke; the serpent is wounded in the head, which is a deadly

wound, it shall never be able to rally its broken forces against him any more; it went out into the world full, but the King of saints has met it, and spoiled it, so that it in some sort is now empty.

As a practical improvement of what has been said, I would on this occasion earnestly call upon you,

1. As mortals, dying men and women, to come over this day to the conqueror's side. Our Lord has obtained the victory over death, come ye and surrender yourselves to him, break your covenant with death and hell, enter into his covenant, and honestly enlist yourselves under his victorious banners, abide no longer among his enemies.—To prevail with you, I would lay before you the following motives.

(1.) If ye are out of Christ, ye live in death's territories; yea, ye are dead; while ye live, death hath dominion over you, Eph. v. 14, "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." Ye are spiritually dead, the threatenings of the law, as the bands of death, gird you about; the divers lusts ye serve are as the chains of death unto you. O! awake, ere ye be cast out of this world, and buried out of his sight.

(2.) The conqueror is ready to receive you, and give you the privileges of the subjects of his kingdom, Zech. ix. 11, 12, "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit, wherein is no water; turn ye to the stronghold ye prisoners of hope, even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee." Christ is coming this day in the word to your graves, and saying to you, as to Lazarus, Come forth, bestir yourselves, O prisoners of hope! and come away, when the Redeemer and deliverer, who has overcome death, is calling you! Abide not under the dominion of the foiled enemy, but come away to the victorious Lord of life.

(3.) Behold how he loved the children of men, John xiv. 13, "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." Why did he fight this battle with death, but to rescue sinners to himself, as a prey out of the mouth of the devouring lion? Shall not his dying love win you, his dying groans awake you, out of your sleep in sin? Does not every wound he received call you to cast away your sins which lay so heavy on him? will ye love death, and slight the Redeemer, Prov. viii. 26, "All they that hate me love death."

(4.) How will you grapple with death, if ye come not out of your sins to Jesus Christ? Man, remember thou must die; the day is coming these eyes will be closed, the breath that is now going out and in will go, to return no more till the last pulse beat. How

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.*

SERMON X.

ISAIAH XXV. 8,

He will swallow up death in victory.

YE have been celebrating the triumph of Christ's victory over death, and professing yourselves the subjects of the conqueror, yea, the members of his body. If you approve yourselves true to your profession, here is the best news you can possibly hear in this world, news which may animate you to fighting the good fight: "He will swallow up death in victory."

I have yesterday handled two heads in the method. A third point now to be spoken to is, Christ's pursuit of the victory. Our Lord Jesus will pursue the victory he has obtained over death, till it be utterly abolished out of his kingdom.—Here,

I. I shall premise some things for the better understanding of this point.

II. Show how he pursues the victory.

I. I shall premise some things for the better understanding of this point.—And,

1. I premise that sin entering into the world, death obtained an universal dominion over mankind: Rom. v. 12, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;" it reigned as a king, ver. 19, "Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses;" it became universal monarch, swaying its sceptre over all nations, kingdoms, and empires, from the one end of the earth unto the other. Every man receiving life in this world, not excepting those that are born to crowns and kingdoms, are born subjects to death. It is the most terrible king, even the king of terrors; an absolute one, against whom there is no rising up. This universal dominion it got by law, upon sin's entering: Gen. iii. 19, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." 1 Cor. xv. 56, "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law."

2. The kingdom of death consists of two very different territories or countries; one is the upper country, namely, the sinful world; the other the lower country, in the other world, that land of utter darkness, where the light is as darkness. In the former, the government of death is comparatively mild, but in the latter inexpres-

* Delivered Sabbath evening, October 5, 1718.

sibly horrible. Here death's subjects have some gleams of light, joy, hope, though mixed with many sorrows; but there they will never see light more, nor enjoy the least ease from their pangs, which is the second death, Matth. xxii. 13, "Cast him into utter darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

3. Death's power over sinners by the law, reaches to the transporting of them out of this world into its dominion in the other world; it has power to carry them to the pit, and shut the bars thereof for ever upon them. Hence we find the rich man dying, and buried, and then in hell lifting up his eyes, Luke xvi. 23; an impassable gulf is fixed between that miserable company and the saints above, ver. 26; so that by death's power, had it not been hemmed in, all mankind had landed there.

4. That all mankind might not perish, the Father gave a kingdom to his Son, which he was to conquer out of the kingdom of death in this upper world: in which kingdom life might reign for evermore through Jesus Christ: John vi. 37, "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." This our Lord undertook willingly, resolving to spare no expense, even of his own blood, to recover it.

5. Our Lord Jesus coming on this expedition, findeth all mankind fettered with the bands of death; death has seized them all without exception, fastened on their souls and bodies, keeping them as prisoners, till they should be transported into the pit from whence there is no redemption; and his own that were given to him of the Father, he finds wrapt up in the common ruin; so he, putting on a zeal for his Father's glory and the salvation of the elect, encountered death in their room, and, after a bloody battle, gained the victory. But after all this the chains of death still continue on his people, and they lie under them till the conqueror, who by his death has purchased their liberty, come and loose them, in pursuit of this victory.

I am now to consider,

II. How he pursues the victory, "swallowing up death in victory."

1. He looses the bands of that spiritual death under which he finds them, morally dead, lifeless, senseless, and motionless to any spiritual good. He puts a principle of spiritual life in them, quickening them by his Spirit, Eph. ii. 1, "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." With authority he asks the grim vanquished tyrant, as he did others in the case of Lazarus, O death! where have ye laid him? He comes to the grave, saying,

My word and my Spirit roll away the stone; and with a powerful voice he cries, Dead soul, come forth. Then feeble death loses its grips, and the dead comes forth to walk before God in the light of the living; and then he is a new creature; old things are done away.

2. He looses the band of legal death off the sinner; he is by nature a condemned man, dead in law, and death holds him fast with the cords of unpardoned guilt. But now the soul, uniting to Christ by faith, and so being clothed with his perfect righteousness, having his satisfaction applied to him, the cords of the guilt of eternal wrath give way, can hold no longer, and so death is beat from its grip of him, Rom. viii. 1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Now may the soul say, It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? The mighty Lord has burst the bars of iron asunder, death's snare is broken, and we are escaped.

3. He destroys the body of death in the believer. Still the grave-clothes hang about the believer, even strong corruptions and divers lusts, the remains of that death from which they were raised in regeneration. There is a body of death cleaves to them, complete in all its members, therefore called the old man, which is the remaining corrupt nature, with the lusts thereof. This makes them groan, and long for delivery, Rom. vii. 24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" This also is swallowed up in the pursuit of this victory, by degrees. For,

(1.) It is crucified, gets a deadly wound, and its destruction ensured in the conversion of the soul to God; Rom. vi. 6, "Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed." The nails are driven through it, and every member thereof: Gal. v. 24, "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts. It is nailed to the cross, and shall never come down till it breathe out its last. Its reigning power is broken, and can no more command with that full sway it did while the soul was under the dominion of death: Rom. vi. 14, "For sin shall not have the dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

(2.) It is weakened and mortified more and more, in the gradual advances of sanctification: Rom. viii. 14, "But if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." Every new supply of grace weakens corruption more and more. The grace of Christ in the heart is a spring that will never be quite stopt, and therefore will work out corruption by degrees, as the spring does the mud; John iv. 14, "But the water that I shall give

him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." They will be like the houses of Saul and David, while the former waxeth weaker, the latter stronger.

(3.) At the death of the body, the body of death is utterly destroyed: Heb. xii. 23, "And to the spirits of just men made perfect." There is not the least remains of it to be seen any more then; then there shall not be the least darkness in the mind, corruption in the will, nor disorder of the affections. When they are taken up into the mount, they are stript of their rags, and clothed with change of raiment, for then Christ says, "Loose him, and let him go."

4. He dries up all the sorrows of death, wipes away all tears. David was sometimes encompassed with them, but he is now got beyond them all. Death entering the world at the back of sin, has made an universal flood of misery, that covers the face of the whole earth; even the redeemed ones walking to Zion, cannot miss to dip their foot in it, and that often very deep; they are liable to afflictions on their bodies and souls, and all that is theirs; they are distressed with desertions and hidings of God's face; they often go mourning without the sun. And what are all these but the arrows of the foiled enemy, wherewith he annoys the Mediator's company in this lower world; but Christ will also spoil this part of death's game in his kingdom; he has taken the poison and strength out of these arrows already, that they cannot give a deadly wound; and in a little these Egyptians whom they see to-day, they shall see no more for ever: Rev. xxi. 4, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying: neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away."

5. He brings all his people safe through the valley of the shadow of death: Psalm xxiii. 4, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me." Death advances at length to the saint as a king of terrors, to loose the soul from the body. They are ready to be affrighted at the sight, but the waters are dried up where they are to pass. It stands before them like a serpent, but the sting of it is gone, they can get no harm of it, "O death! where is thy sting?" may the dying saint say; they tread then upon the serpent, while they pass over to the other side; it casts down the body into the grave, but their more precious part it cannot touch. It is like the storm to Paul; the body, the ship of the soul, is dashed to pieces; but the soul, the passenger, gets safe to land. This is a noble victory got through Jesus Christ.

6. Now, death has nothing of Christ's but the bodies of the saints, not a foot of ground in his kingdom but the grave; and these he will also wrest out of his hand at the resurrection. So, then, at the last day, by the sound of the trumpet, death shall be summoned, in the conqueror's name, to give up its dead; and immediately it shall fling open its doors, and yield all up to him: Rev. xx. 13, "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell gave up the dead which were in them." "Then this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality; then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." Death will hold fast by them that are his own, even when they are come out of the grave; but then nothing that ever belonged to it shall any more be about those that are Christ's.

7. In consequence of the absolute victory over death, it shall be shut up, and confined for the ages of eternity to the lower regions, the lake that burns with fire and brimstone: Rev. xx. 14, "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire: this is the second death." As the waters of the deluge, that overspread the whole face of the earth some time, were, by the voice of God, chased away into, and confined in the deeps; so death, in its whole extent, as comprehending all miseries, greater or lesser, that some time ranged through the earth at liberty, shall be gathered together, and thrown into the place of the damned, there to prey for ever upon its proper objects, the enemies of Christ, the great conqueror.—I am,

IV. To make some practical improvement. This doctrine is of manifold use. I shall drop a few words from it to the profane, and to professors.—I shall address,

1*st*, Profane folk, who are quite careless about their state and conversation, on whose face death is painted, in the eyes of God and all serious persons. Consider,

1. Ye have neither part nor lot in this victory of Christ's over death, but are yet lying a prey to the devourer. What else means that loathsome conversation of yours? Psalm xiv. 1—3,—"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God; they are corrupt, they have done abominable works," &c. What else means it, but that ye are yet rotting in the grave of your lusts? Do not your profane speeches declare your throat to be an open sepulchre; the full liberty your lusts get without control, says ye are not sick of sin, but dead in it; your want of the sense of religion, your not discerning the voice of God in his word, and having no relish for the sweetness of it, all these say ye are dead.

2. Awake, and come forth to Christ, in a holy life, else your lot

shall be for ever among the congregation of the dead: Gal. v. 21, "They who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Christ has set up a kingdom among us, but ye say, Let us break his bands, and cast his cords from us. Remember, if ye continue in this condition, Christ will cast you out of his kingdom, for if death shall be abolished out of his kingdom, be sure such dead souls shall never inherit among the saints, but receive their portion where death bears eternal sway.

2dly, Professors, amongst whom I must reckon communicants. To such,

1. By way of caution, I would say to you,

(1.) Beware of hypocrisy, having a name to live, and yet dead: Rev. iii. 1, "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." O! how many are there like some dead beasts, whereof there is nothing good but the skin! Except the form of godliness, and their religious duties they go the round of, there remains nothing but a rotten heart quite estranged from the life of God, and a life full of dead works. Beware of this, for, with the abominable, the hypocrite will also be swept away.

(2.) Beware of apostacy, Christ will pursue his victory, and therefore whoso draweth back, his soul shall have no pleasure in him, Heb. x. 38; they that draw back leave Christ's camp, and join his enemies, and they will be involved in their ruin with a double destruction, as runaways.

2. By way of application to your case on the back of this communion, I would ask you,

(1.) Have you got nothing at this feast from the conqueror to set you a step forward to the victory, the spiritual victory? Blame whom or what thou wilt for it, a dead state, or at least a dead frame is the true cause; and therefore repent. If thou be mourning and humbled under it, it is a sign of some life; pursue under Christ's banner and thou shalt obtain the victory.

(2.) Have ye sped, and got some victory over the body of death? be not secure, and sit not down on that ye have attained, for death is not yet swallowed up; therefore pursue.—I shall only add,

3. By way of exhortation to duty from this point.

(1.) Be lively Christians, as those that are alive from the dead through Jesus Christ; keep grace in exercise, let not the holy fire go out; watch against deadness creeping in on your souls, yield not to it, for that were to yield to death, that must be swallowed up.

(2.) Join issue with the Conqueror, in pursuing the victory in your own souls. There is a noble Captain on your head; under his conduct, then, fight the good fight; let mortification be your

daily work; while one lust remains, ye must never give over; make no truce with them, or any of theirs, but resolve to pursue these fruits of death, till death be swallowed up in victory.

(3.) Join issue with the Conqueror, in pursuing the victory in the world, especially in the places where ye live. Do your utmost, by word and example, to awaken a dead world; take care of the young generation; and as ye love their souls, remove the stumbling-block of your divisions out of their sight, which threatens the ruin of religion in this parish: when the members of the body are all going asunder, falling off from one another, it is an evidence death is working in that body; and it has made much sad work in the land and country-side already.

(4.) Believe this truth with application, in all your endeavours after holiness. That is the true method of sanctification, using the mean appointed of God, and believing the promised success. If ye will not believe, ye shall not be established.

(5.) Be weaned from the world, and long for the day when death shall be swallowed up in victory; Phil. i. 23, "Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better. Were we eager in the battle, we would readily long for the day of complete victory.

Let all be stirred up, and exhorted from this,

1. To get and make sure their interest in this victory purchased by Christ in this battle. Come to Christ, and make sure your interest in him; alas! what will it avail you that Christ has purchased this victory for you? It would be promising-like in this case, if ye be raised up from spiritual death, or if ye be wrestling against the remains of it.

(1.) O love the Lord, come see the field of battle, where the Lord lay, and love him, John xiv. 13. Whom will ye love, if not him that died for us?

(2.) Hate sin, and seek the destruction and extirpation of it; set yourselves against the body of death. Ye have here—what may excite you to it, for it was your sin that gave death its power, and furnished it with weapons against Christ—You may encourage yourselves in the contest, for victory is certain, for death is already vanquished in some sort: Rom. vi. 6, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Christ." Christ himself is engaged in the pursuit of the victory with you, and for you.

3. Patiently bear your troubles, weaknesses, and distresses, that hang about you, for these workings of death will be quickly over.

4. Join not yourselves with the congregation of the dead. Beware, (1.) Of dead company, making them your beloved companions, for "a companion of fools shall be destroyed." (2.) Renounce dead

works, as an impiety towards God, and unrighteousness towards men. (3.) Beware of a dead case and frame, that is, to be cold, stiff, motionless, of the colour of clay, as men that are in a withered, lifeless, spiritual condition.

Lastly, Let heaven and eternal life be the main thing ye have in view, and are in quest of, saying, There is my rest, and there must I be.

THE SUITABLE IMPROVEMENT OF SAINTS' FORMER EXPERIENCES.*

SERMON XI.

2 KINGS ii. 14,

And he took the mantle of Elijah, that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah?

AMONG all the elders who have through faith obtained a good report, there is none more remarkable than Elijah the Tishbite. He was a person altogether extraordinary. In his exercise and experience he was singularly distinguished. His translation was a striking loss to the church of God; it was, however, not irreparable; his exercises were, in some measure, patterns to the people of God in after ages; his experiences were powerful encouragements to a following of him who through faith and patience inherited the promises; and, what was of still greater importance, Elijah's God still lived, and, as being the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, was to be the object of hope and confidence to his people in all generations. In all their straits he was to be looked to, and inquired after, for his presence with them, and his blessing upon them. Thus, we see, was Elisha exercised in the verse before us; for when overwhelmed, and in perplexity, "He took the mantle of Elijah, which fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah?"

This verse shews us,

1. What Elisha did. (1.) He took Elijah's mantle, that fell from him; God so ordered, that it fell in Elisha's sight for his comfort, that he might have it as a token of the spirit of Elijah resting on him. He willingly takes it up: he did not say, What avails the mantle now, when it is not above Elijah's shoulders? No; that

* Delivered August 16, 1713.

God that did wonders by it before, can do the same again, on whose shoulders soever, by divine appointment; even so the ordinances of God are to be prized for the Lord's sake, not slighted for the sake of the instruments, though they are not like to fill the room of those that went before them. (2.) He smote the waters with it. He was to go back to the schools of the prophets in Jericho. Though the Lord take away eminent instruments, his work must not be neglected, they that are left behind must bestir themselves to carry on the Lord's work. Jordan was between him and them, as oftentimes depths of difficulties will be found in the way of duty. He might have boated it over; that was the easiest way, and to the carnal eye the safest. But it was not the way his godly predecessor took before him; therefore, having the same spirit as he had, he will rather believingly venture on the waters, in the faith that God would carry him through, as he did Elijah before him. So he "smote the waters."

2. We have what he said when he smote the waters: "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" It is a vehement exclamation for the presence of that God that was with Elijah: "Where is," &c.; or a most ardent prayer for it: where art thou? as some read it; for neither "is" nor "art" is in the original. He inquires no more after Elijah, he has no petitions to that saint when once he was departed; that had been impious; what he had to ask of him, he asked while he was on earth. He does not sit down and weep, and pore on the loss of Elijah, as if there had been no more hopes of good days since he was gone; but he betakes himself to Elijah's God. Though Elijah was gone, his God still remained. Elijah's experience of good from Elijah's God, kindled in Elisha's heart a surprising desire after him, and fills him with hope of good entertainment at the door where Elijah had come so good speed; for these are not words of diffidence, but of mighty earnestness, and strong faith; as appears by considering,

3. The issue of the whole, which was according to his wish. God was present with him the same way he had been with Elijah before, Jordan is divided, &c. These words, (he also) some make Elisha's answering to himself, and read them, even he, viz. Elijah's God, yet endures; but though there is no doubt Elisha believed this, yet that reading does violence to the points and stops, without regarding of which there can be no certain sense of any language: therefore our translation is preferable; and these words (he also) are emphatical to shew the freedom of God's grace, which is tied to none, but open and free to all that come to him for it in the way that others received it.—From these words, I take this

DOCTRINE, That the consideration of God's presence with his people in former days, should bring the succeeding generation to the same God for the same entertainment.

In speaking to which, I shall,

I. Instance a few of these experiences of God's people in former days.

II. Shew how we should come to God for the same entertainment.

III. Give the reasons of the doctrine.—And,

IV. Add the improvement.

I. I shall instance a few of the sweet and desirable experiences of the Lord's people, which should bring us to the gracious Giver for the same, and such like; and I shall instance none but these of Elijah, who, you must remember, was a man subject to like passions as we are, James v. 17, and to these I think the text leads me. Some instances of sweet entertainment this holy man had; such as,

1. The God of Elijah gave him the sweet experience of keeping warm and lively in a very cold and dead generation; so that he was best when others were worst. His zeal for God burnt most vigorously when the generation was turned most coldrife, halting betwixt God and Baal, like true fire that burns most keenly in the winter frost, when a chill and cold air was the only air about him. By the warm blowings of the Spirit from above upon him, he was kept warm within. When nothing but deadness was on every hand, the Spirit of life from above kept him lively. So it was with Noah in the old world: Gen. vi. 9, "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation." And Lot, 2 Pet. ii. 8, "For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds."

But where is the Lord God of Elijah in these dregs of time, wherein professors generally are carried away with the stream of impiety from all their liveliness and tenderness that sometimes have been among them, when the more wickedness sets up its head, piety is made to hide its head the more? a sad evidence that God is gone from us, when the standard of wickedness makes such advances, and that of shining holiness is retreating, and can hardly get hands to hold it up. I will tell you two sad experiences, common at this day.

(1.) The fulfilling of that scripture, Matth. xxiv. 12, "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." It is a time when atheism, deism, and immorality, make prodigious advances, and practical godliness is under a deep decay. I doubt if ever Satan had more hands at work to overthrow revealed religion,

and to raze the foundations of it, than at this day; and this effort of Satan's against the church, has joined with it a most lamentable decay of the vitals of practical religion in those that are called by the Lord's name; so that we are like to be exposed to this furious attack, wanting the best piece of our armour against it; that is, an experience and feeling of the power of truth on our own souls: ah! "where is the Lord God of Elijah?"

(2.) What heat there is, strikes all outward, while in the meantime folks are key-cold within; a sad sign of a distempered body. It is not hard to discern severals shewing a great deal of concern in the lamentable occurrences of our day; but how hard is it to find a man that is truly awakened to the exercise of godliness by all the alarming dispensations of our day, that is moved with fear, and busy preparing an ark for the evil day, labouring to get the particular controversy between God and his soul removed, putting out of his way the stumbling-block of his iniquity, and setting matters in order for the day of the Lord? Nay, sirs, though some talk in their sleep, it seems we will all sleep together, till God's heavy hand give us a fearful awakening: "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?"

2. The God of Elijah gave him the sweet experience of the power of prayer: James v. 17, "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months; and he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." He was mighty in prayer; by his prayers the bottles of heaven were opened, the key of the clouds turned, nay, the bands of death loosed, 1 Kings xvii. He was a great favorite of Heaven, whose cries pierced the clouds, got in to the throne, and returned, like Noah's dove, with an olive-branch of peace in his mouth. Such experience of the power of prayer had Jacob; Hos. xii. 4, "Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed;" Gen. xxxii. Many times the Lord's people, when closed up on every side, have found a sweet outgate, their souls flying upward in prayer. The prayers of the saints have been the great ordinance of the church, have frustrated the plans of enemies, and turned them back on their own heads.

But where is the God of Elijah, while the trade with heaven by prayers is so very low? Alas for the dead, cold, and flat prayers, that come from the lips of professors at this day! so weak and languishing, that they cannot reach heaven. Sometimes the Lord lets loose enemies on his people, tosses them from vessel to vessel, and then the way betwixt heaven and them was well occupied. They had still some particular suits lying before the throne, and they

could have given a good account of their receipts. But long ease has made them lose their tongue; so that the experience of many in that point now can hardly be named, unless they turn back to former days. There is one experience of Elijah's, which, I fear, is not uncommon among praying folk at this day, and that is, a restraint laid on them, that they cannot wrestle with God for the averting of wrath from the generation of God's wrath, 1 Kings xvii. 3—9. Such a sad experience had Jeremiah also, before the Babylonish captivity, Jer. xiv. 11, and xv. 1. And though God doth not so reveal his mind now in particular cases, yet I suppose that it will be found, that those who live near God, and have the spirit of prayer in such cases, may find something equivalent thereto in their liberty and confidence with the Lord, and that according to the subject of their requests: Ezek. xxxvi. 37, "Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them."

3. The experience of the sweet fruits of dependance on the Lord, and of a little going far, with his blessing: 1 Kings xvii. 16, "And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord." Elijah saw so very few for God in his day, that he thought he was alone; and the Lord strengthened his faith by such experiences. Many times God's people have had such experiences of the Lord's bringing great things about by small beginnings, as the cloud like a man's hand, according to the promise, Prov. iv. 18, "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Hos. vi. 3, "His going forth is prepared as the morning, and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." God has many ways of working in the experience of his people; and when he works by means, sometimes he does great things by small means, as the feeding of Elijah, the widow and her son, so long on an handful of meal, and a little oil in a cruse; Haman's hellish plot is overturned by the king's falling from his rest one night, Esth. vi. 1. Sometimes by contrary means, as Elijah was fed by the ravens who were more likely to have picked flesh from him, than to have brought it to him.

But where is the God of Elijah at this day, when what we have seems to be blown upon, that it goes in effect to nothing? Our table is plentifully covered, yet our souls are starved; our goodness sometimes looks as a morning cloud, it blackens the face of the heavens, and promises a hearty shower, but quickly proves as a little cloud, like unto a man's hand, which is ready to go to nothing; yea, the generation is blinded by the means that have a natural tendency to give light. Ah! "Where is the God of Elijah?"

4. The experience of a gracious boldness to face the most daring wickedness of the generation he lived in, though it was one of the worst. This eminently appeared in his rencounter with Ahab, 1 Kings xviii. 1; his standing alone against four hundred and fifty of Baal's prophets; whatever was his natural temper, he owed this to the grace of God, for when he was left to his natural courage, it failed him, chap. xix. 2—4; but the Lord spirited him then for the hard work he had to do, that he feared nothing in his master's cause, Acts iv. 13, "When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, they marvelled, and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."

But where is the God of Elijah now, while the iniquities of our day meet with such faint resistance, while a brow for the cause of God, a tongue to speak for him, and a heart to act, are so much wanting. The wicked of the world, though they have an ill cause in hand, yet they pursue it boldly; but, alas! the people of God shame their honest cause, by their cowardice and faint appearing in it. If God give us not another spirit, more fitted for such a day, we will betray our trust, and bring the curse of the succeeding generation on us.

5. The experience of a glorious and powerful manifestation of himself, in a solemn ordinance, even at the sacrifice on Mount Carmel, which was ushered in with the spirit of prayer in Elijah, 1 Kings xviii. 37—39, "Hear me, O God, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces, and they said, The Lord he is the God, The Lord he is the God." That was a glorious day's work, when Satan fell like lightning from heaven, from which day, no doubt, many dated their conversion, some their revival, and the people there generally felt somewhat divine on their spirits. Such glorious days the church has often had in ordinances, which have been as a high stream-tide of the gospel; so that three thousand were converted at one sermon, Acts ii. 41.

But where is the God of Elijah, when so little of the Spirit's influences is found in ordinances, even solemn ordinances? Here is the mantle, but where is the God of Elijah? Here are the grave-clothes in which sometimes the Lord was wrapt up, but where is he himself? Communion-days have sometimes been glorious days in Scotland, and sometimes the gospel hath done much good; so that ministers have had almost as much to do to heal broken hearts, as now to get hard hearts broken; but "where now is the God of Elijah?"

6. The experience of being enabled to go far upon a meal, 1 Kings xix. 8, but where now is such experiences, while there is so little strength in the meals to which we now sit down? This is a time wherein there is much need of such an experience; the Lord seems to be saying to his people, "Rise and eat, for the journey is long;" and what a hard journey some may have, ere they get another meal, who knows?

Lastly, The experience of the Lord's removing difficulties out of his way, when he himself could do nothing at them; Jordan divided; so Peter had the iron gate opened to him of its own accord: for when the Lord takes the work in hand, were it never so desperate as to us, it will succeed well with him. Sure we have need of his experience this day. How is the case of many souls so embarrassed at this day, that they cannot extricate themselves, by reason of long and continued departures from God! so that all they can do is, that they are fighting and going backward. Ah! "where is the God of Elijah," to dry up those devouring deeps! Enemies have surrounded the church, and brought her to the brow of the hill, ready to cast her over; "where is the God of Elijah," to make a way for her escape?—I shall next consider,

II. How we should come to God for the same entertainment, if we would come speed. There were two things Elisha did, for the presence of God to be with him, as he had been with Elijah.

1. He prayed for it, sent his prayer to heaven for it; and if we would have the experience of God's presence as in former days, we must ply the throne of grace for it this night. And there are three things in his prayer, which must be in ours.

(1.) A most pressing sense of need, where he saw he could not venture into Elijah's post without Elijah's God. Sense of need makes earnest prayers. What is the reason we see not the glory of the Lord as formerly? we reign as kings without it; men have found out ways of their own, to get comfort without communion with God; they have the creatures' breasts to suck at, when the Lord's consolations are not dropping into them. But if ever the Lord return to this generation, there will be a hunger raised in them, that all the world will not be able to satisfy.

(2.) A most vehement desire of his presence; "Where is the God of Elijah?" There was a flame of desire after the Lord, that could not be satisfied without him. Some have observed in nature, that the tongue is tied by a double string to the heart in man. If so, it seems it has been designed that the tongue should be a stringed instrument, to sound out only the language of the heart. Were the heart more eager for the divine communications, we would

wrestle with God in earnest, and not let him go till he bless us; but, alas! our coldrife prayers do but beg a denial.

(3.) There was great faith in his prayers: "Where is the God of Elijah?" Faithless prayers will be inefficacious prayers to the end; but the hand of faith will pierce through the cloud wherewith the Lord covereth himself. 1*st*, He believed God could do what he sought, therefore he calls him Jehovah, and the God of Elijah, who had discovered his power in dividing the waters before. 2*dly*, He believed God would do it, he had God's call to the work; Elijah was taken away from him, but he had Elijah's mantle in his hand, for a token God would be with him, as with Elijah before; and he was not faithless, but believing. So we must believe also, if we would see the glory of God; not only the power, but the good-will of God; Jer. xvii. 6, 7, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is."

2. He used the means Elijah before him did, for attaining God's appearance and manifestation of himself. He smote the waters; no matter though the means be unlikely to produce the effect, if they be of God's appointment; and in faith we must stretch out the withered hand, if we would have it restored, and venture on the work upon the credit of the promise.

As a conclusion to this discourse, let me exhort you to go to the Lord Jesus this night, and wrestle for his presence as in former times; and let the consideration of God's presence with his people in former times, take you to the same God for the same entertainment.

To prevail with you, I would offer the following motives.

1. Consider it is too evident the Lord has forsaken this generation in great measure. He is writing bitter things against this church and land. Her beauty is marred upon all her assemblies; where the cloud of glory some time rested, we may write *Ichabod!* Hence it is so few are converted in our day; and the Lord's own children, though they get some food, yet they fare not so well as in former times. Why? because the Lord is withdrawn in his anger. The sun of the gospel in Scotland is as a winter sun, and looks as if near the setting, at least getting under a dark cloud: Isa. lxiv. 7, "There is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold on thee, for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities."

2. This would be the way to get a blessing; importunity prevails much in heaven. Were we thus exercised, we might get a blessing to this church, a blessing to this communion: Cant. iii. 4, "I found him whom my soul loveth; I held him, and would not let him go,

until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chambers of her that conceived me:" a blessing we should seek from him to ourselves. Though the Lord is sometimes so angry with a generation, that there is no turning away of his wrath, yet the serious seekers of his face will always get the blessing: Isa. iii. 10, "Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings."

3. The door we set you to is a door where many have been liberally helped before you, and the Lord's arm is not shortened. The saints that were richest in experience got them all there, and all the fair ones now in glory, he was their God, that was with them in life, death, and now after death. Let the good report of his house, then, make you flock about his door, for there is no ground for that temptation, Job v. 1, "Call now, if there be any that will answer thee, and to which of the saints wilt thou turn?"

4. It is a door where there is nothing given for personal worth. All that ever was given there to any of the children of fallen Adam, was given with that protestation, Ezek. xxxvi. 32, "Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel!" That the most unworthy in all succeeding generations might see they were welcome, it is for his own sake; and that cannot change.

Lastly, What will ordinances avail without his presence? Nay, they will do ill, instead of doing us good; they will bring on us a curse instead of a blessing; and therefore wrestle with him, and protest, Exod. xxxiii. 15, "If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence." The sermons will be to you as an empty sound, the Lord's table as an empty chair of state, when the King is away. If his presence be not given you, you will get no spiritual feast; and one had better be at a common table, than at the Lord's table, when they do not feed: 1 Cor. xi. 29, "For he that eateth unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself." If the king be away, then there will be no furniture for trials, none for the evil day, that seems to be approaching quickly; none for a dying day that is awaiting all of us. Now, if ye would find him, seek him in Christ, look for him in the several means of his appointment, streets, courts, &c. Put away every thing that mars his presence with you.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.*

SERMON XII.

2 KINGS ii. 14,

And he took the mantle of Elijah, that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah?

I SHALL NOW,

III. Give the reasons of the doctrine, or shew, that the consideration of God's presence with his people in former days, should bring the succeeding generation to the same God for the same entertainment.

This consideration may and ought to work upon us in two ways.

1. By way of simple excitation and upstirring. When Elisha considered what God had done for Elijah, it set his soul on fire, inflamed his desires, set his heart a-longing after the Lord, that he might deal the same way with him. Thus the consideration of God's gracious appearances to and for his people in former times, should be a powerful motive to labour for the same or like experiences. It should inflame our hearts with a holy emulation, and earnest desire of the blessed entertainment others have got before us at God's door; for the following reasons:—

(1.) Because, so far as we come short of it, it is a sign we are so far off the way where the footsteps of the flock are to be seen, Cant. i. 8; and that is so dangerous, that it may well strike a nail to our heart to think of it. What is the reason we fare not so well about the Lord's hand as others before us? Have we not the same God to go to, the same covenant-promises? We have the same breasts of divine consolations, as full as ever, but it seems we have much lost the art of sucking them, that sometimes has been our experience.

(2.) Because, so far as we come short, it is a sign of God's anger against us, that he hath some quarrel with us he had not with his people in former days of the right hand of the Most High; and may not this prick us to the heart, and set us to our knees? Isa. lix. 12, "For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us." What is it but the sins of the generation, that stops the communication of the divine goodness? Does the Spirit of the Lord depart till he be grieved, or the holy fire go out till it

* Delivered August 16, 1713; afternoon.

be quenched? Does the Lord close his distributing hand till his people close their mouths? or does not the oil run while there are empty vessels to receive it? While the furious wind of persecution blew on God's people in Scotland, and the sweeping rains fell, sweeping away their earth from about them, the fountain of the divine goodness to them ran freely; but now, alas! through long ease, we have got the springs stopt with our mud and earth.

(3.) Because we have as much need as they had: Luke xv. 17, "And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's house have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise, and go," &c. If we be less at God's door than other's before us, it is not, I am sure, for any wealth we have at home, more than they had; it is not that we do not stand in need, but that we are not so sensible of our need. Many of the Lord's people have taken little rest, when they had more than we can pretend to; they have been very anxious to increase their stock when it was far above ours; and when we consider how fast they ran, when they had reached far above our small measure, should not that stir us up to mend our pace? Phil. iii. 13, 14, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

(4.) Because these glorious examples should not be without due influence upon us. Example is a most efficacious incitement; Cæsar grieved when he saw the statue of Alexander, and considered how he, at the age of thirty, had conquered the world, and himself, being older, had done nothing; Heb. xii. 1, "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with such a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." How may we blush when we consider the stature of those before us, that have been as the palm-tree, while we, growing in the same soil, are like pitiful shrubs! Surely if our spirits were not mightily sunk and degenerate, the glorious example of the Lord's people in former days would set our whole soul a-going after the God of Elijah.

2. It should work on us by way of encouragement. Elijah's example gave Elisha hopes he might find God the same to him he had been to his predecessor. Encouragement is a notable spur to diligence, and is that which is most likely to take with men. What is it which makes us that we wrestle not for God's presence, as in former days? even unbelief, that tells us we need not be at the pains, for it will not do. But the report of the godly in former days con-

tradicts the report of unbelief, and therefore should bring us back to God's door; even as when a beggar, having called at a door for his alms, was coming away without it, and should meet with another that had been plentifully served there, who would say to him, That is a good house, and though one may stand long at the door ere they be served, yet they give ay a liberal alms at length; would not that bring the beggar back again? So should the consideration of God's presence with his people in former days bring us to him for the same entertainment. For this there are the best reasons; such as,

(1.) Because the experiences of the Lord's people in former days were given, and put on record, for that very end. All the experiences of God's presence with his people in former days, are as so many signs of peace on earth, and good-will towards men. They, as it were, stand at God's door, to invite and encourage those of succeeding generations to come in there for the same or like entertainment; and his people do but answer the design of them, when they come and inquire, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?"—Eph. xii. 7, "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus."—Rom. xv. 4, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope."

(2.) Because these experiences say there is enough to be had in God for the seeking, if we seek in his own way: Psalm xxii. 4, "Our fathers trusted in thee, they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried to thee, and were delivered; they trusted in thee, and were not confounded." The saints that have gone before us have spread a good report of God's house, that others after them might come to the same door. They have had the experience of the Lord's help in all the cases that we can be in; and whatever be the difficult steps we have to go, if we mark narrowly, we will see the footsteps of the flock before us in these steps through which their God has graciously handed them: Psalm xxxiv. 6, 8, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.—O taste, and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him." And their experiences are their testimony to the truth of his promises: Psalm xii. 6, "The words of the Lord are pure as silver tried."

(3.) Because we have the same advantages that they had, yea, and more than some of them, that lived in darker days than we do. How many have groped the way to the throne of grace, when they had not such light shining around them as we have to shew the way; but, however we make the comparison, we have the same God to go

to that they had, who has as much to give, and is as gracious as ever: Jam. i. 17, "Every good gift, and every precious gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning;" the same High Priest over the house of God, that is as well heard by the Father now as ever, Heb. xiii. 8, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever;" the same covenant, for it is everlasting; the same promises, whose truth and mercy endure for ever.

(4.) Because all that ever the best of the saints got was in the way of free grace. It was not only undeserved, but given over the belly of ill-deserving: and if it be free grace that opens the door, what needy sinner is there but may come forward for a share? All the love that was ever bestowed on any of them, was free love, without the least deserving; if ye think there is any exception, look through them all, from Adam downwards, and name the man if you can. Paul challenges the world to do it, Rom. xi. 35, "Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?"

IV. I am now to make some practical improvement. And this,

I. In an use of reproof. This reaches a reproof to several sorts of persons; as,

(1.) To our modern blasphemers, who reckon the saints' experiences of the workings of the Lord's Spirit on their spirits nothing but the effects of imagination, heat of fancy, or somewhat else. So true is it, 1 Cor. ii. 14, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." But when we consider the sanctifying effects of these operations felt on their spirits, how by these their hearts are loosed from the lusts to which they were formerly glued, inflamed with love to God and his holy law, and thus to despise the world, rejoice in tribulation, joyfully to suffer for Christ, and deny themselves to all that is dear to them in the world for his cause, we must conclude, that these men do but new-model the doctrine of those that taught long ago that Christ cast out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils; and that, as their working is formal, suited to the spirit of the natural man; so their spirit is profane.

(2.) Those that slight the experiences of the people of God, and appearances to and for them, as not worth their notice, far less of their pains, to get the same entertainment; and yet they did more service to the cause of God, by their godly simplicity, than we are like to do by our refined prudentials; and no wonder, for if a man will be truly wise, 1 Cor. iii. 18, "Let him become a fool, that he may be wise." A little faith and dependence on the Lord for light

and strength, will go farther than much carnal foresight. But they had the spirit of preaching, praying, and other things belonging to the service of God; and we have the bare act of it. The good Lord send back the Spirit, come of the act what will!

(3.) To those who are ready to talk big of the experiences of God's people, and of God's appearances for them in former days. With a whole heart, their consciences bearing them witness, they are not concerned to wrestle with God for themselves or others now, or to put to their hand, in their several capacities, to the revival of practical godliness in the generation; but, on the other hand, do improve it to the hardening of their own hearts, and to the contempt of ordinances and ministers. These are the genuine offspring of those who built the tombs of the prophets, and garnished their sepulchres, yet are filling up the measure of their fathers' iniquities, Matth. xxiii. 29.—Whence I may observe, (1.) That dead prophets are better liked by a formal generation, than living ones, for they get less trouble of the dead than of the living. (2.) Such would make a brave use of the means of grace that were in former days, which they are sure they cannot get, while they have no power to improve the means that are among their hands. (3.) These will condemn their fathers' misusing of the prophets that are gone, who yet will trample on their successors that are remaining.

(4.) To those who improve the experience of the Lord's people in former days against themselves, to the deadening their own spirits, instead of quickening them, when they look upon them. By the subtlety of Satan, they are thereby discouraged and broken instead of being animated, as they ought, to seek the same entertainment. It is the remains of a legal disposition in any of the children of God, that is the source of discouragements arising from this airth. They look more to the goodness that was in the saints, and the ill that is in themselves, than to the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, through which alone the divine goodness did flow to them, and through which it may flow as freely to themselves.

Lastly, To those whose hard thoughts of God the experience of all the saints from Adam cannot remove. So vile are they, they conclude, that God's heart cannot be towards them, though they have all the experiences of former saints, as so many depositions to confirm the welcome of all that come to him through Christ, whatever they have been. O lay by these hard thoughts of God, so destructive to yourselves, and so dishonourable to God. Look among all that ever came to God, if ye can find one that died at his door; if that be your lot, you will be the first; but God's word says you shall not: John vi. 37, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in nowise

cast out." Beware of hard thoughts of God whatever your disappointments be; if the devil can get that point wrought up in you, he has you fair before the wind for hell, where the fearful and unbelieving land: and there is not a readier way on earth than that, to create a hell within a man, a hell, I say, where sin and sorrow for sin are both at a height. But here some may propose this

OBJECT. No other person's case is like mine. ANSW. And there is none good as the Lord; he is goodness itself, infinite goodness, and infinitely good to sinners in Christ; and that is sufficient to swallow up your matchless evil. What think ye of Paul, Manasseh, Adam? But though ye cannot see a case like yours among all the elect of God, you cannot thence conclude your case is marrowless, more than if ye were in a wilderness where ye could see no marks of a person's foot, ye might conclude never one was there before you. But suppose the saints' experiences leave you, yet the word will reach you: Rev. xxii. 17, "And the Spirit and the Bride say, come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will let him take of the water of life freely." And if your case be quite new, God will do a new thing according to his word. Some person must go foremost in every case; venture you, then, on Christ with that case of yours, that others that may be in it after may follow, and ye shall find a matchless physician for a matchless malady.—I shall only add,

2. An use of exhortation. Let me exhort all, especially communicants, to seek the Lord's presence and glorious appearances as in former days; and make this your great business, never ceasing till he make himself known, as in the days of old.

(1.) Seek his glorious presence to the spirits of his people, as in former days. The Lord's work here is at a sad stand; cry, "Revive thy work in the midst of the years," Hab. iii. 2. Their bones are in that respect lying dry about the grave's mouth. O cry for the Spirit of life to enter into them! Even the trees of God's planting are become mighty sapless; God's wheat is mighty withered at the root; cry for a shower of influences, that the work within, that is at such a stand, may go on yet, and soul-exercises may be set on foot again.

(2.) Seek his powerful manifestation of himself, to purge the generation's wickedness, and to make holiness more common and shining in our day. There is a deluge of profanity overflowing the land: "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" Cry for his appearance, to turn the stream, to make iniquity hide its head, and holiness to settle in its room. There is a glorious promise to the gospel-church, in Zech. xiv. 20, "In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar;" cry for the accomplishment of it, to him with whom is the residue of the Spirit.

(3.) Seek his glorious appearance in ordinances, as in former days, that he would beautify the place of his glory by his presence. Do your utmost to get him into your mother's house, for it is a heartless house when he is away. We have been in pain, we have, as it were, brought forth wind, we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth: "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?"

(4.) Seek his glorious appearance for his churches, now when they are so low, and the hand of the Antichristian faction is so high: Jer. li. 50, "Remember the Lord afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind;" for your mother-church in particular, against which many are gathered, saying, Let Zion be defiled. Behold how pin after pin in her tabernacle is loosed, that it must quickly lie along upon the ground, if the Lord himself do not appear to hold it up. Seek for the revival and preservation of the covenanted work of reformation, that sacred pledge transmitted to us at the expense of the precious blood of many of the saints, the bearing down and destroying of which is like to make these nations yet swim with blood. Our rowers have rowed as into deep waters, where they have sunk our nation, and solemnly buried our covenants in the ruins of it: "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?"

Cry for their resurrection; and if ye can do no more ye may do as Martha and Mary, that owned their relation to their brother while in the grave; and say as Mary, and these with her, John xii. 34, when Christ asked, "Where have ye laid him?" "Lord!" say they, "come and see."—For motive,

1. Consider that the Lord's appearances and manifestations of himself as to his people in former days, would make a pleasant change on the face of affairs this day, it would be as life from the dead: Isa. xxxv. 12, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God." It would renew the earth's withered and decayed face. If, therefore, you have any respect for the thriving of your own souls, any pity on the perishing souls of a graceless multitude, any regard to God's honour and ordinances, any concern for his ark and work, seek his glorious appearance for his church.

2. Consider that matters are come to such a pass with us now, that nothing less than God's gracious appearance for us, and presence with us, as in former days, can prevent our ruin; we have all grounds to fear an arousing stroke from the hand of the Lord, by

means of a French, Popish, and malignant faction, set to raze our Jerusalem to the very foundation, whose tender mercies are cruelty; and if we should miss it, which is not likely by all appearance, there will be a blacker sight seen on this church, and these nations, by reason of that spirit of enmity against the purity of religion, and against all practical religion, that has made such dreadful advances this day, that, if God do not seasonably strike in, will, through time, wear out the saints of the Most High.

Lastly, Consider the glorious things spoken of the latter times, to which the world seems to be advancing apace. The extraordinary efforts made this day for advancing the kingdom of the devil in the Christian part of the world, the universal decay of piety in the churches look like a critical juncture, when the honour of God is called upon to "arise like a giant refreshed with wine," to purify a people to himself, and to strike his enemies on the hinder-parts. Whatever sad work may be made on the churches before that come, O cry, "Awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord! awake, as in the ancient days," Isa. lix. 9.—I shall close with a few advices.

1. Stir up yourselves to repent and reform: "Strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die," Rev. iii. 2. It is high time we were bending to our feet, when the fire has begun to catch hold of our bed of sloth; we have slept long enough, labour now to get and keep matters clear betwixt God and your souls.

2. Lament after the Lord: 1 Sam. vii. 2, "And all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord." Upon that they had occasion to set up another Ebenezer. The tears of the Lord's people after a departed God are the ready way to bring back their tender-hearted Lord. Mourn over your own sin, and the sins of present and former times.

3. Study unity, and beware of division, Psalm cxxxiii. 3; be more afraid of your own than of other people's sins. This church at best is but weak; let us not by divisions make ourselves an easier prey to the common enemy, lest God be provoked to cast us into the fire, to make us burn together.

4. Lay out yourselves for the advancement of piety, to stir up one another to holiness, love, and good works. Put to your hand this way to hold up a standard for Christ in the world; the devil's agents are busy, not only against the out-works of religion, but to sap the foundations of it. What are you doing to strengthen them? To talk and complain about the defections of the time, will not do it, but apply your main force to advance and strengthen the vitals of religion in yourselves and others.

5. Labour to put yourselves in a posture for suffering; cast the

burden of earth off your back, and let your shoes be on your feet, your eye on the prize; pursue it over the belly of all hardships you may meet with, and you will readily find God will be with you.

Lastly, Pray, pray, lift up a cry for the remnant that is left; let us meet continually at the throne of grace, ministers and people, to tryst with him in his ordinances, and to wrestle for his presence.

CHRIST THE FATHER'S GIFT TO HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE.*

SERMON XIII.

ISAIAH lv. 4,

Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.

IN the first verse of the chapter, there is a large offer of grace, and a cordial invitation to all to improve the blessings of salvation. In the second and third verses, the Lord expostulates with sinners for their slighting this offer, and pursuing after other things. Then the invitation itself is renewed, and backed with weighty motives. In all this the Lord has a special respect to the Gentiles, who at that time were strangers to the covenant of promise. In the text, there is a notable ground of encouragement for sinners to come to Christ; the very scope of it is to encourage them to come to him; it is as if God had said, Why are you afraid to come? behold I have given him for that very end, to be a witness, a leader, and a commander to the people. Therefore you may conclude, that he must have a people to believe in him as a witness, follow him as a leader, and obey him as a commander. Did ever any prince give any captain's commission, but when he designed also he should have some under him as soldiers?

In the text, we have a declaration of what God the Father hath done for poor sinners: and because it is an unequalled deed, it is ushered in with a note of attention and admiration, "Behold I have given." He has made a gift to sinners, a gift such as may supply all their wants.

1. Consider the giver; "I," that is, the Father, the contriver and source of the sinner's salvation. None else could give such a great gift, none else had power to make this gift. In regard of the giver, then, it ought to be received with all due respect and gratitude.

* The time when this discourse was delivered is not mentioned.

2. Consider the gift, "him;" that is Christ, of whom David was a type; John iii. 16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." This is a gift suitable to the greatness of the giver. He gives like a king, yea, like the King of kings: for his gift is unspeakably and infinitely great.

3. Mark the conveyance of this noble gift: "I have given him;" I have freely bestowed him. This was according to the covenant of grace; he was not given against his will. No; his Father's will and his are one, he gave himself also. The Father freely designed him for the work, and he cheerfully accepted, saying, "Lo! I come."

4. Consider the end of this gift. For what purpose did the Father give Christ? Why, it was to supply the needs of the people, both the Jews and the Gentiles. But here the Gentiles seem to be especially aimed at, ver. 5, "Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not; and nations that know not thee shall run unto thee." What sort of people these were, may be learned in part from the ends for which Christ is given. He is given,

(1.) For a witness, to testify the truth and to reveal the mind and will of God to the people: John xviii. 37, "To this end," said Jesus, "was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth; every one that is of the truth he heareth my voice." Hence it follows, that they are an ignorant people that know not God, nor the mysteries of salvation; the very people, that have lost their eyes in Adam; an unbelieving people, who will not believe God, unless he proves what he says by his witness.

(2.) For a leader, to go before them as a prince and a captain, as the word signifies, and so they are a people that have difficulties to go through, and know not their way, and so stand in need of a leader. He is given,

(3.) For a commander, to give them laws and rules for their obedience. This implies that they are an unruly people, who must have one to keep them in order.

There is a "behold" prefixed to the text. This serves to stir up attention and admiration. Let us consider and wonder, how graciously and suitably the Lord has provided for us.—In this verse there is this

DOCTRINE, That the Father's giving of Christ to be a witness, leader, and commander to sinners, is a matter worthy of deepest consideration, and greatest admiration.

In discoursing on this subject, it is intended, by divine aid,

I. To shew you some special steps of God's giving this noble gift, Christ.

II. To inquire for what this gift is so remarkable.

III. What we may behold in the Father's giving this gift. And,

IV. To conclude with a practical improvement.

We are then,

I To shew you some special steps of God's giving this noble gift, Christ.

1. God made this gift before time, even from all eternity, in respect of designation; the Lord designed him to be a witness, leader, and commander to the people; from all eternity did God design to bring many sons to glory; and therefore at that period also did he design their captain for them. What is done in time is but the execution of eternal decrees; eternal life was promised us in Christ Jesus before the world began, Tit. i. 2.

2. God gave him in the morning of time, in the first promise: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent." When Adam fell, and involved all his posterity in a lost condition, when he had carried all of them out of the way of life, so that none of them could ever know it again without a witness, nor walk in it without a guide, then God promised this noble gift, to make up what Adam had lost, and to restore to us what he had taken away.

3. In the fulness of time, when he actually exhibited this gift; when the word was made flesh, and tabernacled among us, "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law," Gal. iv. 4.

Then was seen that great gift foretold by Moses and the prophets, shadowed forth by the law, and looked for with earnest expectation by the people of God. A time it was when he thus came, wherein the world lay in deep spiritual darkness; the knowledge of the true God was almost totally abolished among the Gentiles; they knew not God, and the true religion was dreadfully corrupted among the Jews. The few that remained were wearied with the burdensome ceremonies, that could not make the comers thereunto perfect, and therefore looked for the mercy promised unto the fathers.

4. God gave this gift in the last time, when the gospel was freely preached to all nations. Then it was, and ever since, that Christ set up his standard in the world, to receive all, without distinction that would fight under his banner. Thus God gave him in respect of the free offer: "He is the gift of God," John iv. 10.

5. He gives him, in particular, to every elect soul in the time of love, the day of espousals. This is that blessed spot of the believer's time, wherein they match with the Son of God, believe his word, and

give themselves up to his conduct. They thus receive the unspeakable gift of God; and this is a crowning mercy indeed! Whosoever thus by faith receives this precious gift, shall receive him over again in the marriage-day, that is, when time is over and gone. Then it shall be said, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."—Let us,

II. Inquire for what this gift is so remarkable?

1. It is remarkable, for the hand from whence it came. It was the Father that gave Christ; even he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, Rom. viii. 32. If a gift be valuable for the sake of the giver, then Christ is the most valuable gift, as given by the Father; and therefore he that slights Christ, slights the Father also. The town-clerk of Ephesus supposed that none could but know, that the Ephesians would be zealous for the image of Diana, because it was supposed to have fallen down from Jupiter, Acts xix. 35; ten thousand times better reason have we most highly to esteem our Lord Jesus, because we have the most infallible assurance, that he came down from God, the Father of mercies, "My Father (said Jesus), giveth you the true bread from heaven," John vi. 32.

2. It is remarkable for the persons to whom it is given. Who are they? they are men, and not angels, sinners and not saints: "God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us," Rom. v. 8, "Yea, in due time he died for the ungodly." Men that give gifts, usually give them to their friends, but God gave even his unspeakable gift to his enemies; men gave to the rich, but God gave to the poor; he gave this gift to them that had mis-spent the gifts bestowed upon them at their creation. O let us set a mark here, and say, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God!" 1 John iii. 1.

3. It is remarkable for the seasonableness of it. God not only gave his Son, but he gave him in proper season; as it was with Abraham, for whom God provided a ram to be offered in the stead of his only son Isaac, who was already bound on the altar; so, when the sinner's neck was on the block, when divine justice had a sure hold of him, and was about to strike the fatal blow, then did God provide, and give Jesus to be a sacrifice in our stead. O what a surprise, as well as a comfort, was the promise of him to poor Adam! and O how welcome to us should be this faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that God sent even his own Son, "to seek and to save that which was lost."

4. It is remarkable for the suitableness of it. Unsuitable gifts

are not much esteemed. What though a man would give a purse full of gold to one starving for want of bread, or present plenty of food to a person just dying of an incurable disease? Such unsuitable gifts could be of no use to these persons; but Christ is every way suitable to the sinner's case: "Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through him; because he ever liveth to make intercession for us." For such an High-priest became us, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." The balsam of his blood exactly answers our wounds in breadth and length; it cleanses from all sin, and purges the conscience from dead works. It was contrived by infinite wisdom for this purpose, and every sinner whose eyes are opened at once sees his suitableness; for Christ is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God," 1 Cor. i. 24.

5. This gift is remarkable, for the necessity of it: Acts iv. 12, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." What would the world have been without Christ but a dungeon of darkness, a pit of horror, a prison of misery and despair? Had we only heard God thundering on Mount Sinai, and not God groaning on Calvary, then we had made the rocks rent, and the hills resound with our desperate outcries. No man, no angel, was able to help; nothing but the blood of God could expiate our guilt.

6. It is remarkable for the greatness of it. It is a gift without a parallel in heaven or in earth: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son," John iii. 16. A greater gift than this Heaven could not give, and earth could not receive. The salvation is great, but the Saviour, the person who wrought out this salvation, must be greater. Many rich and blessed gifts God gives his people, but they are all little when compared with this great gift, for along with it he freely gives us all things. When God resolved to display and communicate his goodness, his wisdom, power and bounty, he made a world out of nothing; but when he resolved to manifest his love, and discover all his glory, he gives us to view it in the face and person of Jesus. The Sabbath was appointed for celebrating the praises of God for the work of creation; but in addition to this, eternity is destined to celebrate the praises of the riches of his grace and glory in Christ Jesus.

7. This gift is remarkable, for the freedom of it.—Christ is a gift every way free. There is a cluster of wonders in the freedom of it. —These we shall in part take notice. This gift is given,

(1.) To the undeserving. We deserve no good at the hand of the Lord, much less the greatest good; we cannot challenge a drop of

water by merit, much less Christ and his grace; so that God cannot wrong us, whatever he deny us. It is given,

(2.) To the ill-deserving; to them who deserved death and damnation; who were justly lying under the curse of the first covenant, and whose demerit would have sunk them to hell. Yea, this gift is given,

(3.) To them that were not seeking it: "I am sought (says God) of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that were not called by my name." Christ can say of all his people, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." The Father presses the gift of his Son upon poor sinners, even when they are feeding on husks, and not seeking after him, saying, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness," Isa. lv. 2. It is given,

(4.) To them that were not expecting it, or looking for any such gift at his hand. How was Zaccheus surprised when Jesus said unto him, "This day is salvation come to thine house," Luke xix. 9.

(5.) Yea, it is still offered to them who have often refused it, who have been frequently bidden to the marriage-supper, and have as often refused to come: "Ye will not come to me, (says Jesus), that ye might have life;" but yet still does he say, "Why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

8. This gift is remarkable for the unchangeableness of it. All the spiritual gifts and callings of God are without repentance; but above all it is so with Jesus, his great and unspeakable gift. Where he once comes, he never afterwards goes away. There is a strict bond of union betwixt Christ and the soul, which death itself cannot dissolve; yea, "there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus." If the soul cannot keep fast hold of Christ, Christ will keep fast hold of it: "I know my sheep (says Jesus), and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand," John x. 27, 28. If the hand of faith be weak, he can strengthen it; and the Spirit of God does not faint or grow weary. The term of the union between Christ and believers is during life eternal.—Let us,

III. Inquire what we may behold in the Father's giving this gift. Much, much indeed, may we here behold, that merits our attention, admiration, gratitude and love. But at present, time only permits me simply to mention a particular or two.

1. In this gift we may see our own needs. If our necessity had

not been very great and urgent indeed, God would not have given his own Son, to be a witness, leader, and commander to us; had not our misery been great, and also beyond the power of men and angels to deliver from it, God would not have provided and given such a ransom for us. This at once shews our misery to have been so great, that none but Jesus could deliver us from going down to the pit. The divine excellence and infinite value of the remedy, clearly demonstrate the absolute necessity on our part of such a cure.

2. In this gift we may see infinite love. What but love, love eternal, and boundless grace, could have induced God the Father to have given his own well-beloved Son, even to die in the room of such creatures as we are? Instead of merit, we had the very greatest demerit; and God was under no obligations to give us such a gift; his own love, then, was the source. In the gift itself, we have the greatest display of love ever made to any of the creatures of God; the greatness of it the heart cannot conceive, nor the tongue express; the greatness of it will through eternity excite the admiration, gratitude, and love of angels and men.

3. In this gift, we have to contemplate a glorious design of doing good to sinners. All the gifts of God are intended for our good; but as this is the greatest of them all, yea, infinitely greater than them all taken together, so the good evidently intended by it is also exceeding great; yea, it bears a proportion to the infinite value of the gift itself. When we consider the divine dignity of the person sent, and his near relation to the Father, when we consider the greatness of the work his Father gave him to do, and the tremendously dreadful sufferings which he appointed him to endure, we may at once conclude, that the good thereby intended for sinners was so great, as to be worthy of the wisdom and goodness of the person who sent him, and worthy also of the Son of God to accomplish. This was nothing else than eternal life: Jesus, "the Captain of our salvation, was made perfect through sufferings, that he might bring many sons to glory."

IV. Let us now conclude with a practical improvement.

My friends, when God makes offer of this gift to you, slight it not, but receive it gratefully; accept of Christ as he is offered in the gospel. When Christ on the cross saw his mother standing by the disciple whom he loved, he said unto her, "Woman, behold thy Son!" then to the disciple, "Behold thy mother!" and from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home. So does God address you, saying to each of us, Behold my Son Christ, and take him home into your hearts.—For motives to this consider,

1. That Christ is a leading gift. Wherever he comes, he never comes alone, he brings a train of blessings along with him, even all the blessings of the everlasting covenant; for in him all the promises are yea and amen. Receive him, and ye shall have a complete and everlasting righteousness with him, reconciliation and peace with God, pardon of sin, sonship to God, an inheritance among them that are sanctified, and, finally, a right to all things. If ye receive him all things are yours: "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours: and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's," 1 Cor. iii. 21—23.

2. He is a soul-satisfying gift, in the enjoyment of which your souls may rest. Are you not seeking satisfaction, and pursuing after happiness? but "why do you seek the living among the dead?" Why do you suck the dry breasts of the world, and the impure fountains of your own lusts, that cannot satisfy? Isa. lv. 2. Nothing but an infinite good can satisfy the desires of the human soul, and here it is. Here in Christ, like Habakkuk, you may find a source of joy and strength, when all other comforts fail. As nothing but the mother's breast can satisfy the hungry infant, so nothing but Christ can satisfy your souls aright: "Whosoever drinketh of the water (saith Jesus) that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of living water, springing up into everlasting life," John iv. 14.

3. He gave himself to the death, that he might be a gift suitable to your necessities. He is that bread that the Father gave from heaven; bread that was ground between the mill-stones, and baken in the oven of God's wrath, that he might be bread to you.

4. Do ye not need, positively need him? Can you be happy without a pardon, peace with God, a righteousness, and an everlasting inheritance? Now, there is no possible way of obtaining these, but by him. O! my fellow-sinners, how can ye live or die without him? Sure your own necessities have a loud cry to you not to slight him; your souls, pining away in sin, cry, O slight not a Saviour! your souls, truly sick, cry, O slight not the physician!

5. Consider, he is in your offer; you may have him if you will. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth, say Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." You see there is nothing to hinder your receiving him: for the Father is willing to give his Son to you, and the Son is willing to give himself, the Spirit is willing: "All things are ready, come ye to the marriage." Nay, it is not merely a simple offer, but a command: "This is the command of

God, that ye believe on his Son." Therefore under the pain of God's eternal displeasure, accept of him: "He that believeth shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned.

6. Consider, he will not always be in your offer. When once the Master hath risen up, and shut the doors, ye may knock in vain, there will be no more entrance. Thus ye may be taken from the offer, or it from you; now, then, is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation.

Lastly, Consider if ye receive him not, ye are lost for ever; and then it will be more tolerable for them that never heard of him, than for you:

"If he that despised Moses' law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses, of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of God?" For we know him that hath said, "Vengeance belongeth unto me, and I will repay, saith the Lord," Heb. x. 28—30.

My fellow-sinners, will ye now take this gift from heaven? I am sure there would not need to be so much work to make you receive a gift that is not worthy once to be named with this: if ye will not take it, what have you to say for yourselves? Perhaps the reasons why some will not receive this gift may be easily found out; as,

1. Some will not, because they need it not; like Esau, in another case, they may be ready to say, "I have enough, my brother, keep that thou hast unto thyself," Gen. xxxiii. 9. Alas! many are full, are rich, and reign as kings without Christ; but, O! would to God they were rich, and did reign. Such persons only reign like Saul, when God departed from him. Sure am I, that if there be a soul under heaven needs Christ, it is such a person. They who, like the Laodiceans, are rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and know not that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, blind, and naked, O how much need had they to listen to the counsel of Jesus, and buy of him gold tried in the fire, that they may be rich; for what have ye without Christ, but has God's curse in it? all your gifts are cursed to you, Mal. ii. 2, "I will even," says God, "send a curse upon you, and will curse your blessings, yea, I have cursed them already," because ye do not lay it to heart.

2. Others will not, because they have not room for it; many have no room for Christ; their hearts and affections are otherwise taken up. But, O! what takes up that room? what guests do you lodge in your hearts, that the Son of God cannot have access? If ye have not room, will ye make room? Tell him ye are content to take him,

and invite him to make room for himself, and he will do it. He is able to cast out your idols, and to pull down the strong-holds of sin and Satan that are in your hearts.

3. Some will not, because they like not the onerous cause of the gift. There are many that cannot digest what is required of them who belong to Christ: "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." They could take the crown, but they cannot away with the cross, or the hard service. Such are to be pitied, for they are led aside by mistakes; if Christ was in your hearts, his service would be your choice, and you would glory in his cross.

4. Many will not, because they have no will to come under the obligation of a gift. Thus it was with the Jews; going about to establish their own righteousness, they submitted not themselves to the righteousness of God. This pride of heart lies often vailed under the shew of humility, when all the while the soul refuses to come to Christ, because of unwillingness. Well, you must either be obliged to Christ for your salvation, or perish; for do what you will, or suffer what you will, if Christ be not yours, you perish.

Lastly, Not a few will not, because they think, though it may do good to others, yet it can do none to them. Who knows but this may be the temptation of some! this is the poisonous breath of monstrous unbelief, that at once flies in the face of God's truth, making him a liar, 1 John v. 10; and in the face of his wisdom, as if he had provided an unsuitable remedy. Sinner, who ever perished in the hands of Jesus? and O what desperate cases has he cured! But do you object there was never the like of yours? ANSW. Then you will glorify Christ the more, if you will venture yourself in his hand. Many wonderful precedents have you as proofs of his ability. Venture yourselves then in his hand, "for he is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us." Amen.

THE CHRISTIAN WEAK, YET STRONG.*

SERMON XIV.

2 Cor. xii. 10,

For when I am weak, then am I strong.

The text is a gospel-paradox, best understood by experience. The Christian is a mystery, a mystery to the world; the saints are hidden ones, yea, in a great measure they are a mystery to themselves; so is the Christian life. The apostle in the text, tells us one of the great mysteries of the Christian life, and that is meat out of the eater: "I take pleasure," says he, "in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake." Christianity teaches not a Stoical apathy, no man is more sensible of the weight of his burden than a Christian; yet he can not only bear a heavy burden patiently, (which I believe is a mystery to many of us), but he even finds a pleasure in a burden he is not able to stand under. After sense has considered a trial, gone out and in through it, and found nothing but bitterness, faith can discover a great deal of sweetness in it. The Christian well exercised, may get some glorious sights in his trials and temptations, that afford a refined pleasure.

1. It is a sweet sight for a Christian to see himself standing a candidate for glory, and on his trials for heaven, 1 Pet. i. 6, 7, "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness, through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Christ."

2. It is sweet to see Christ dragging the corrupt will to the cross, and driving the nails through it, for its mortification: Jam. i. 3, "Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience."

3. It is sweet to see Christ, in order to the starving of lusts blocking up the passes by which provisions might be brought to them.

4. To see the soul out of weakness made strong, and the devil outshot with his own bow. This account of it the text gives, "For when I am weak," that is, when I am weak in myself, "then am I strong" in Christ; ver. 9, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my

* This and the following discourse delivered July 12, and 13, 1713.

strength is made perfect in weakness." The Lord allowed the temptation to continue with him till he was driven out of himself, and was brought to confess he was not man enough for it, and then the Lord gives him strength against it.

1. In the text there is something supposed, namely, that the Christian is not always weak in the sense of the text; he has not always the due sense of his weakness; sometimes his locks are cut, and yet he will go out as at former times. It is no small piece of Christian labour to keep a due sense of our weakness and insufficiency. When the Christian is strong in himself, then he is dead weak. If the devil can but get the man blown up with conceit of his own ability to stand his ground against him, then he has him fair before the wind, as Peter. Hence it is that some will stand before great temptations, and fall before less ones.

2. In the text, there is something expressed. When the Christian is weak in his own sight, then he is really strong; he baffles the temptation, he stands the trial, when he sees he is not man enough for it. Sometimes the devil rages, drives furiously by temptations, persecutions, and the like; but unless he raise the dust, so as to blind the Christian's eyes, that he see not his own weakness, nor the strength of the grace without him in Christ, instead of driving him off his way, he will drive him to Christ, in whom he is enabled to stand, so as to come off a conqueror. I take up the sense of the verse in this

DOCT. That when the Christian is weak, then he is strong; weak in his own eyes, strong in Christ.

In discoursing upon this subject, I shall consider the following points.

I. What is that weakness, which paves the way to spiritual strength?

II. Offer some remarks for confirming this point.

III. Give some reasons of the doctrine. And,

IV. The illustration of these will make way for a large practical improvement, in various uses of the subject.

I am then,

I. To shew what is that weakness which paves the way for spiritual strength.

1. There is in it a holy bent of the heart to that work, to which strength is required, with an honest desire and resolution to go through with the work. If a man hath no mind for the work, it is all one in that respect, whether he be weak or strong: Matth xxvi. 41, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the Spirit in-

deed is willing, but the flesh is weak. But the Christian, however weak,

(1.) Aims honestly at the performance of every duty. Like David he has respect unto all God's commandments, Psalm cxix. 6: he dares not baulk any of the laws of Christ; the whole law is written in his heart by divine grace, and he labours to write it over in his practice; he has no objection to any duty he knows to be enjoined of the Lord, but says, "I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right," Psalm cxix. 128.

(2.) He is honestly resolved to resist temptation, and mortify lusts. This is what must be done, though he knows not well how; he concludes, that though there be a lion in the way, he must be forward: "I have chosen," says he, "the way of truth," Psalm cxix. 30; his feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; he dares not think to fail with every wind, nor to go back and lie down in the embraces of his lusts, for it is to be supposed God has set fire to his rest there.

(3.) He has laid his account with the cross, and resolves to continue his weak shoulders under it, at Christ's call: Matth. xvi. 24, "If any man," said Jesus, "will come after me, let him deny himself, take up the cross and follow me."

He is resolved to follow the Lamb, though he should lie at the end of it, and never to leave the way of the Lord, for all the storms that Satan may raise in it; he prefers Christ's cross to the world's crown; and what he cannot keep with a good conscience, he will reckon himself better without than with it.

2. A sense of utter inability, and insufficiency, to go through with that work, or any part of it: 2 Cor. iii. 5, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." Though his designs are noble and generous, he knows he has nothing in himself to accomplish them; for ye must know, that the Christian's confession of weakness is no compliment, they are children that will not lie; it is no preposterous modesty or diffidence, that blinds a man to his own ability. But he sees things as they really are, and believes himself no more weak than he is. When he looks over all his inventory, of what he is, and what he has in himself, he sees nothing to depend upon, either in point of doing or suffering.

The Christian lies fairest for spiritual strength, when he is so low and weak in his own eyes, as that he dare not trust to anything for his through-bearing, that is not Christ's or in Christ: "They are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh," Phil. iii. 3. A

man is no more weak in his own eyes than he has reason.—The Christian considers himself as weak,

(1.) When he dare not trust to his own stock of natural or acquired abilities for suffering for Christ. These things may sometimes carry a man through what is duty for the matter, but oftentimes they leave a man in the lurch, and can never help a man to do any good thing that God will accept; and no wonder; for saith Jeremiah, chap. xvii. 5, 6, "Thus saith the Lord God, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land not inhabited." See also Isa. xl. 29—31.

(2.) When he dares not trust to the principles and resolutions of his heart. Nature is mighty venturous in religion, when it is flushed with vigorous resolutions. The Scribe said unto Jesus, "I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," Matth. viii. 19. But when the temptation or trial comes, they fall down like the walls of Jericho; the fire-edge soon wears off the spirit that is not stayed on the Lord.

(3.) When he dares not trust to vows and engagements. Every gracious soul will give itself away to the Lord, but they will not trust to these bands, but to him to whom they are bound: Isa. xlv. 24, "Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." If men trust to their own vows, they will find them a sorry fence, that will go like Samson's withs when he heard the Philistines were upon him.

(4.) When he dares not trust to his own endeavours: Psalm cxxvii. 1, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." A Christian must be as diligent and vigorous in his way of duty, as if he were to do all alone; but if he would see the success of these endeavours, he must look for it from another quarter, as if he had done nothing. If the saint will not learn this lesson otherwise, God will let him work on, till he work himself out of breath, and so lie down at the Lord's feet, as the church did: Isa. xxvi. 8, "We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have, as it were, brought forth wind, we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth."

(5.) He dare not trust to the good frame he sometimes finds his spirit in. A good frame is a precious ointment to refresh the weary traveller, but is not a staff to lean upon, 1 Chron. xxix. 17, 18; it may be quickly lost, Psalm cvi. 13, "They soon forgot his works;" it is a tender bud of heaven that is easily nipped, as Peter at the

voice of a maid. It is a heavenly fire that needs continual supply, or else it will go out; if the Spirit of God cease to pour in oil, that lamp will soon be extinguished.

(6.) He dare not trust to habitual grace. Paul had a good stock of it, but he durst not venture to live on it: Gal. ii. 20, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." The grace within the saints is a well, the streams of which are often dry, but to the grace without them in Christ; they can never come wrong, for it is an overflowing fountain. How quickly would the branch wither, if it were left to the sap within itself, but the sap in the stock keeps the branch green: "He that eateth me," saith Jesus, "even he shall live by me," John vi. 7.

3. There is the weak soul turning to a strong God for strength, in the way of believing, 2 Chron. xx. 12, "O our God! wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us, neither know we what to do; but our eyes are towards thee." When the strong man goes into himself, and musters up all the forces and powers of his soul, for the duty, or against the temptation, the weak man, that lies fair for strength, goes out of himself to muster up the forces of heaven by faith.—I may take up this in three things.

(1.) The weak man that becomes strong, truly believes that God has treasured up in Christ the strength and furniture of all the heirs of glory, for their work, 1 Cor. i. 30, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace," John i. 16. Since Adam fell, he never trusted any of the saints with their own stock, but has made the Mediator the great Trustee of divine grace, that if they would be supplied, they must go to him for it.

(2.) Jesus Christ with all his salvation, being offered in the way of the everlasting covenant, the weak soul by faith lays hold on that covenant, and Christ therein, for sanctification, as well as justification. Thus the weak creature is joined to a strong God, the empty soul is joined to him in whom all fulness dwells; so that in this sense, though he have nothing, yet he possesseth all things, viz. in Christ his head; they are complete in him, Col. ii. 10.

(3.) He believes the promises of the covenant, and, on the credit of them, ventures on duty against sin, and takes up the cross: 2 Chron. xiv. 11, "Help us, Lord, our God, for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude." Though resolutions, engage-

ments, and vows, be not to be trusted, yet a man may safely trust the promise; it is the blessed contrivance of the second covenant, that all our duties are there wrapt up in promises; and whenever we are called to do or suffer, the covenant has a promise of strength for it, and the Christian, sensible of his weakness, trusts it.—I am,

II. To confirm this point.—For this purpose, I offer these remarks.

1. The Christian, when he closeth his own eyes, sees best; when he trusts least to his own understanding, he is best directed, according to the promise: Prov. iii. 5, 6, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine understanding: in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Carnal wisdom is an ill judge betwixt sin and duty; and if men renounce it not, and singly give themselves up to the divine conduct, they will be ready to stumble at noon-day: 1 Cor. iii. 20, "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain." Lot lifted up his eyes, Abraham closed his, and left his choice to the Lord, Gen. xiii. 9, 10. This is the reason why godly simplicity oftentimes carries men well through, while carnal policy leads men into the ditch; and weak shrubs stand, while lofty cedars are blown over, that God may stain the pride of all glory.

2. When he ventures on the difficulties in the way of duty, not knowing how to remove them, he gets best through. This was the case with Abraham, when called to offer up his son, Gen. xxii; but when he went down to Egypt, there was a difficulty in the way, which he would not leave to the Lord to remove, but fell on ways and means of his own, and came off shamefully, Gen. xxii; overfast, overloose in this respect, 1 Cor. iii. 16, "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God, for it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." A little faith is more valuable than much carnal foresight. Leave difficulties in the way of duty on the Lord, if ever you would get safe through them: Psalm xxxvii. 5, "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass."

3. The Christian soldier fights best when the violence of the enemy sets him to his knees. Paul experienced this, when he besought the Lord thrice, and got a gracious answer; and so he recommends it to others, 2 Cor. xii. 8, "Praying always (says he) with all prayer," Eph. vi. 18. It was in this last posture that Jacob got the notable victory, Gen. xxxii. 24. Hence it is said of him, Hos. xii. 4, "Yea, he had power over the angel and prevailed; he wept and made supplication unto him: he found him in Bethel, and there he spoke with us." Did temptations and troubles set us to our knees, the

devil would be outshot. Did the threats of the enemies at this time, but cast professors out of their beds of sloth down to their knees, the Lord's work would quickly triumph over the enemies of it.

4. The lower the soul lies, it is the nearer the throne above: Isa. lvii. 15, "For thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." A man will get a better view of the stars from the bottom of a deep pit than from the top of a mountain. The soul is never nearer the divine communications, than when shame and blushing make him stand affar off with the publican, smiting on his breast. The soul in that case will get the kindly invitation, "Come up hither;" when the self-conceited presumptuous sinner will hear, "Go down yonder."

5. The duty a Christian is called to, and sees himself most unable for, he performs best. Peter, when he thought himself well buckled for a confession for Christ, denied him at the voice of a silly maid; but when he had better learned the duty of self-denial, he boldly stood upon defence, Acts iv. 13. A man had better be in the dark, than walk in the light of his own sparks. A Christian never goes so actively through a duty, as when he leaves his own furniture for it behind him, throws it down in point of confidence, and takes up the promise.

6. The temptation that to a man is most contemptible, is most dangerous: Prov. xxviii. 14, "Happy is the man that feareth always; but he that hardeneth his heart, shall fall into mischief." Many times the devil's wounded men do more execution than his formidable army set in battle array. Lot kept his ground in Sodom, when among a company of incarnate devils, but fell foully when he thought himself in no hazard in the cave. If ye would stand, ye must never despise the meanest, nor think the greatest temptation insuperable. The meanest is too hard for you, the strongest too weak for the strength that you may have in your God.

7. The Christian that stands before the Lord with trembling legs, is the meetest to take up Christ's cross, and will bear it best. He that dare say least, is the man that will do most: Isa. xl. 30, 31, "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." He that ventures on the hour of trial, merely with a Roman courage or natural briskness of spirit, has but a weak reed to lean to.

There is none more likely to be a disgrace to religion, than the presumptuous self-confident professor, that wants nothing to support the cause of God, in the time of trial, but only other professors' hearts like his heart. The best and surest backing Christ will have, will be from those that tremble when he shall roar like a lion, Hos. xi. 10, see also Isa. xxxv. 4—6.

8. The Lord's people thrive best, when they have nothing but from hand to mouth. The most enriching time they have, is when felt needs are always driving them to God's door, and making them hang on about his hand: Rom. v. 3, 4, "Knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope." The Christian that has most trials, has most experiences. Many battles afford variety of spoil to the Christian soldier; and a tract of smoothness in a man's lot, is ordinarily a dead time with the Christian, as to trading with heaven; he has not much outgiving, and has as little income. When David going against Goliath, got on Saul's armour and dress, 1 Sam. xvii. 38, he could not go with them; but when he had nothing but the staff, and the bag of stones out of the brook, he went freely, and succeeded.

As the fire burns most vigorously in a keen frost, so faith acts most vigorously when it has nothing to animate it but the naked word of promise. But when all is laid to a person's hand as they would wish, faith is so clogged that it cannot readily go with them.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

SERMON XV.

2 Cor. xii. 10,

For when I am weak, then am I strong.

We now proceed,

III. To give some reasons of the doctrine, or shew, That when the Christian is weak, then he is strong; weak in his own eyes, strong in Christ.

Among other reasons which might be assigned, we shall mention the following.

I. Because he who is thus weak will not enter on difficulty but when he is called to it; and God's call to his people for any piece of work implies a promise of strength: Psalm xci. 11, "For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

Self-confidence is venturous, thinks nothing too high for the man. Hence, he does not stay till he be led, but runs into temptation; no wonder than he comes foul off, like Peter in the devil's ground, the high-priest's hall. But the first thing the weak man does, is to be sure of his call, knowing there can be no ground for confidence without it. And he will not be over soon satisfied with it, but ponders the path of his feet, Prov. iv. 26.

2. He is driven out of himself to the Lord Christ, the fountain of strength: "Blessed is the man whose strength is in the Lord," says the Psalmist, Psalm lxxxiv. 5, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God," Psalm lxxi. 16. He leaves the rotten ground of self-confidence, and trusts in him that raiseth the dead, and calleth things that are not as though they were, and out of the mouths of babes perfects praise. The power of heaven is engaged in his favour; he believes, therefore is not left to be ashamed. This is a sure way for strength: for,

(1.) It lies on the honour of God, to strengthen the soul that depends upon him alone, according to his word, and that in point of his veracity; God's word of honour is good security; also in point of his goodness and gracious nature. Trust reposed in a generous man is a strong tie upon him in favour of the party trusting him. And I think there is much in that word, Jer. xxxix. 18, "For I will surely deliver thee, because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the Lord." Lot would rather that any evil that was to come should have fallen on himself and family, than on his guests; the reason is in these words: "For therefore came they under my roof," Gen. xix. 8. Humanity teaches people to preserve the life of a litle bird, that flies into their bosom to be preserved from a ravenous bird. And they that take Ruth's way may be sure of the blessing she got: Ruth ii. 12, "The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust."

(2.) Because it sweetly answers to the grand device of God touching the sanctification of sinners. For, (1.) The treasures of sanctifying grace are all laid up in Christ, "who of God is made unto us sanctification," 1 Cor. i. 30, and from him all gracious influences are to be derived: "Out of his fulness we are to receive, and grace for grace," John i. 16. Accordingly the sinner comes to him, as the famished Egyptians to Joseph. (2.) They are to be derived from him by faith according to our needs; this is the appointed mean for conveyance of grace and strength from Christ, Gal. ii. 20. Accordingly the soul believes, that is, trusts in him for supply. Now, when the soul takes God's own way for strength, how can it miss it.

(3.) Because the glory of God's grace appears best in such a case. Thus it was with Paul, to whom God said, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." When Christ cured the blind man, he anointed his eyes with clay. The grace of God works best alone; and therefore the Lord, to stain pride, and prevent men from sacrificing to their own net, brings them very low before he appears to work for them, that his work may be wonderful, Deut. xxxii. 36.

Lastly, Because in that case the grand stop of divine communications is removed; the vessel is empty, and so the oil runs. Self-confidence is diametrically opposite to the grand device of sanctification revealed in the gospel. That a man should trust himself, was the fundamental maxim of the Pagan morality, but revealed religion plainly overturns it: Prov. xxviii. 26, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." It is practically set up in the hearts of all men by nature, but grace overturns it: Matth. xvi. 14, "If any man, (saith Jesus) will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

IV. I am now to make some practical improvement of this subject,

1*st*, In an use of information.

1. Learn, that they who were never carried off their own bottom for sanctification, have their religion yet to begin. It is a fundamental error in practice, for men to think, that though they need the righteousness of Christ for justification, yet they need but activity and diligence with their natural powers for holiness. This is as absurd, according to the scriptures, as to say the cripple needs but to ply his limbs, and so shall be cured. It is an evidence,—(1.) That thou hast never got a view of the corruption of nature, the plague of thine own heart; thy plague is in thy head—(2.) That thou hast never felt the need of Christ for all his salvation, yea, for the principal part of it, that is, sanctification, which is the great design of the whole mystery of the gospel of Christ. And,—(3.) That therefore self has yet Christ's room in thy heart. Thou actest from thyself, and consequently to thyself, and so art rejected of God in all that thou dost.

2. We are taught, that they make foul work, at communions who,

(1.) Bind themselves to the Lord for work, but lay not hold on the everlasting covenant for strength. I will not deny but the sacrament is a seal of our engagement to the Lord; but, according to the scripture, it is mainly a seal of God's full covenant to believers, as appears from the words of institution; and therefore I think the main work of a communion-occasion is that Christians receive a full Christ, lay hold of a full covenant, suited to all their

needs, and be no more faithless, but believing. They mistake also,

(2.) Who come to that ordinance without a deep sense of their wants, weakness, and imperfections. They who would have any thing at Christ's door, should be very sensible of their rank poverty at home: Luke i. 53, "He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away." They should be capable to lay their fingers on their sores, and tell what aileth them—Those mistake also,

(3.) Who are at no pains to prepare for that ordinance, and to bring strength from heaven for the management of it: "Without me (says Jesus) ye can do nothing," John xv. 5; if nothing, how will they of themselves manage such a great and solemn work? therefore they have much need of intercourse with heaven by faith and prayer.—Those err,

(4.) Who depend upon their own preparation. It is hard work to prepare the heart for a communion; but it is harder to be denied to it, and trust nothing to it when we have prepared. It is hard to be wrestling with an ill heart, till it be brought to some tolerable frame; but harder to trust all to free grace.

3. We may learn that none are so ready to be a prey to the devil as the presumptuous, self-confident sinner. This is a train which, when laid for a man, will quickly blow him up. The poor trembling saint will keep his feet, when such an one's bent bow will quickly break,—In a word, we may conclude,

4. That the best way to stand is to be much in the work of undermining our self-confidence, and razing the grounds of it, shoveling away the mire in which that flag grows; we would thus be brought into firm ground, and would grow up into Christ.—I now proceed to,

2dly, An use of comfort. This is comfortable to humble souls,

(1.) In the case of the church of God. This church is very weak at this day; she is weakened by mischiefs established by laws, by divisions, but above all, by the provocations of her members against the Lord; she is cast into a decay of true tenderness, and practical godliness; she is far gone on in it: she has many enemies powerful and subtile, and there are few to stand against them, a weak company, weak heads, hearts, and hands; never fewer, perhaps, of the nobles and gentry of Scotland to take her by the hand, than at this day. But it is very like she will be weaker yet, ere she recover strength, and many she trusts to now will leave her, that her army, like Gideon's, may be brought to a small remnant, ere the tents of Midian fall. But the farther the arm of flesh goes from the church of God, the nearer is the arm of God drawing to her.—There is comfort,

(2.) In your own case. It is no doubt the perplexing question of serious souls, How will I go cleanly through? Religion is no easy work at any time, but it is like to be harder than ordinary in our time. How will we get the Lord's way kept? Christ's cross borne? If we faint at little trials, what shall we do under greater ones? But remember, when you are weak, then are you strong.—I shall only add,

3*dly*, An use of exhortation. I exhort you to keep up a due sense of your own weakness, and trust for your through-bearing in the Lord.

(1.) Keep up a sense of the weakness of your heads, and lean not to your own understanding in the point of sin and duty; but be much hanging about the Lord's hand for light to clear your mind as to the way in which you are to walk.

(2.) Keep up a sense of the weakness of your hearts, and depend not upon your own strength for carrying you on in the way of duty when known, but go to the Lord for strength. In order to prevail with you, I mention the following motives:—

[1.] This is necessary, to evidence your sincerity in what you have been doing. You have been taking a guide, professing yourselves incapable to guide yourselves, and a supporter, because you are unable to support yourselves. Honour him, follow him, and depend upon him.

[2.] You will have need of strength; be sure you will be tried; public trials seem to be abiding us, private trials you may lay your account with particularly; Satan is most busy at such a time.

[3.] You will never get through in your own strength; you have no reason to trust to yourselves, whatever the present frame and purposes of your hearts be. For, 1*st*, Many sad instances have been of those who have got the slip of their own hearts, that thought they had as good reason to be confident as you, that they would never go back; witness Noah, Lot, David, Solomon, and Peter. 2*dly*, Many that pretend fair are real nothings. We have need the Lord would hold the glass before our eyes, that we may see ourselves, our state and frame. 3*dly*, The best have very deceitful hearts: Jer. xvii. 21, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" And it is a general maxim, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool," Prov. xxviii. 26. We are very much unacquainted with ourselves, with our own hearts, we know not what manner of spirits we are of, Luke ix. 55. The root of wickedness lies within us.

Lastly, Keep up the sense of your weakness, and trust to the Lord alone, and you will be strengthened with all might, so that

you can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth you, Phil. iv. 13.

I shall offer some considerations to impress this on your spirits.

I. You will have need of strength, if you intend to reach heaven. Indeed, if you have taken your last sight of Immanuel's land, and have no mind for the Lord's work, but to turn your back on his way, and go with the stream, you may sit at your own ease, Satan will see to your swift progress, and will not leave you till he have you cast into the oven of God's wrath. But otherwise you must go against the stream, and you must have strength.

(1.) Strength for the duties of religion, and these are as large as the law, which is the rule of duty, and it is exceeding broad. Thou must now set thyself to internal and external obedience, thy duty to God and man; give the obedience of heart, lip, and life; thou must be universal in obedience, otherwise thou art hypocritical in it, and so rejected; thou must have an holy conversation; thine eye must ever be on the Lord, and his holy law; holiness must go through all your actions, your civil and natural actions. "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God;" and surely for all this you need strength.

(2.) Strength for temptations. You must now resolve to enter the lists with a subtile devil, that has now more than five thousand years' experience in the art of tempting. How will you stand? With his agents in the world, he will fight against you with tongue, feet, and hands, and that too may be ere long; and your most dangerous enemy is within; you have innumerable tempters within you: Jam. i. 14, "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." There are many snares in the world, but none so dangerous as the corruption that is within each of our own hearts; this will ever be ready to break out, and embrace its friends whenever they come near.

(3.) Strength for the cross. Have you engaged with a crucified Christ? You must take up your cross, and bear it; and this will require strength, (1.) To bear your every day's cross. Go times as they will, you will find every day will have the evil thereof. (2.) Your holiday's cross, in the church's troubles: "Thou hast (says Jeremiah) called, as in a solemn day, my terrors round about," Lam. ii. 22, and how heavy that may be, we know not; but if the devil's time be short, he will be sure to have great wrath. We have had a cheap religion of it for many years, and therefore it has got many customers: but if the after-reckoning were come, which seems to be making haste, it is to be feared that many of us will throw it down again, and say, We never intended to have it at that rate.

2. You have no strength in yourselves answerable to that work; and therefore, without doubt, you will never be able of yourselves for the least of it: 2 Cor. iii. 5, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." Two things evidence this.

(1.) Our stock of strength was spent ere ever it came to our hands. The first Adam got it, Eccl. vii. 29. God hath made man upright, and he by falling left us without strength, Rom. v. 6. And thus the unregenerate world lies in wickedness, unable to recover themselves, but are held captive by Satan in chains of lusts, not to be broken by the power of nature.

(2.) Though, since Adam fell, God has given strength to his people, yet since that time God never trusted any mere man with his own stock of strength; but he has put a common stock of it into the hand of the Mediator, to be distributed by him according as the duties of his people require, and as they make application to him for it; and no man can come, saying with the younger brother, Luke xv. 12, "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me," intending to set up and stand by himself. But he must come to stay at home, and receive his daily provision at his Father's table, and out of his hand, according to his necessities. The believer, being first by faith united to Christ as the head of influences, wherein all fulness dwells, must depend on him as the members on the head, the branches on the stock, and by faith derive strength from him continually, which cannot be, but under this sense of weakness which we press upon you, John i. 57; 1 Cor. i. 30; John vi. 57. Therefore, I say confidently, that, be ye saints or sinners, ye have nothing in you to trust for the work of religion, if it be not Christ in you; and, be your stock always what it will, it is a very weak one, and you must not trust to it.

Lastly, You will get enough of strength in Christ, if you take this way to it, living and going out of yourselves, under a sense of utter weakness, to the Lord Christ, as the head of strengthening influences. If you ask, What is that? I answer, It is the soul's discerning an utter inability in itself for any spiritually good action, but withal believing that God has treasured up sufficient strength in the Mediator, to be communicated to those that are his, and therefore embracing a full Christ for all, as held forth in the everlasting covenant; and then venturing on duties, watching against temptations, and taking up the cross, upon the faith and credit of the promises of the covenant, trusting that they shall be made out to him; which trust may be weaker or stronger, but according to the strength of it, so is the income of strength to the soul. In this way

the weak go from strength to strength. Thus shall you be helped to go through the most difficult duties acceptably, though not perfectly, to stand against the strongest temptations, to mortify the most powerful lusts, and to bear the heaviest crosses. This has made Christians attain to an eminent pitch of holiness, joyfully to embrace a prison, banishment, a gibbet, a fire, and the most cruel torments enemies could invent. The more you are emptied of yourselves, placing confidence in the Lord, the more will you be strengthened with might in the inner man; and when you shall be perfectly unselfed, if we may so express ourselves, so that there shall be no more of it to marr the communication betwixt Christ and you, then you shall be perfectly holy, and set above the reach of all evil; but because we are not properly divested of self-confidence in this world, therefore we do not arrive here at perfect strength. But all the saints, however, will give their testimony, that "when they are weak, then they are strong."—Amen.

THE INTERESTING INQUIRY.*

SERMON XVI.

MATT. XX. 6,

Why stand ye here all the day idle?

IN the beginning of this chapter, Christ spake a parable concerning the kingdom of heaven, the scope of which is to shew, that those who, by conceit of themselves and their actings for God, do place themselves among the first and chief favourites of heaven, shall be rejected of God, and treated as the last; they shall receive the last of Heaven's favours; while they who, through a feeling sense of unworthiness, dare not make such advances, shall be brought forward from among the last, where they placed themselves, and advanced to the first rank, where they shall be placed of God, who gives heaven as a gift to them that do not plead for it as a debt. This is plain from the occasion and conclusion of this parable: the vineyard is the church; the householder is Christ, whose vineyard it is; his going out at several hours is the call of the gospel at several times, coming to some sooner, to others later; the market-place is wherever the gospel comes. Our text is a pithy

* Delivered, Fast-day, August 19, 1713.

expostulation with those that are standing there idle, even at the eleventh hour, within an hour of sun-set; according to that, "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" They are idle, in so far as they are not taken up about their work for eternity. Our text, you see, is a close application; the nature of this day's work requires it; and I hope you will not think we misapply it, if we apply it to you. Every word in it has its particular weight.—The following inquiries are suggested from it.

I. Why are ye "idle?" What reason can ye give for your being idle?

II. Why are "ye" idle, more than some others?

III. Why "stand" ye idle?

IV. Why "here" idle?

V. Why idle in the "day?"

VI. Why idle "all the day?"

We shall attend to these inquiries in their order.

I. Why are ye "idle?" If ye deny the charge, there are two things at least, which must be yielded to by most, if not all of us.

1. Ye have been very busy doing nothing; but it is better, they say, to be idle than doing nothing. What is it that most of us are busy about, but nothing? Prov. xxiii. 5, "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not, for riches certainly make themselves wings, they fly away as an eagle towards heaven;" that which is nothing for our souls, nothing for a blessed eternity. Indeed man is a laborious creature; the life of the greatest sluggard is a continued succession of actions; the soul of man is like a watch that goes as fast when it goes wrong, as when it goes right. But, alas! laborious idleness and solemn trifling in the vanities of this world, is but a pitiful way of spending a man's life, which is but a short time of trial, in order to an unalterable state.

2. Ye have been very busy doing worse than nothing; like these, 2 Thess. iii. 11, "For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy bodies." Alas! most of our lives are ill parted betwixt two; one is spent in weaving the spider's web, the other in hatching the cockatrice eggs, Isa. lix. 5; either spent in nothing, or worse than nothing; either sitting still or making more progress hell-ward: either letting the separation wall stand as before, or building it higher and stronger. But there is one thing that cannot be yielded, at least to the most part of this generation; that is, that they are busy in their great work. No, no; idleness in this respect is the epidemical disease of the day, under which both professors and profane are pining away. For your conviction in this, consider,

1. What else means the lean souls among us? Solomon tells us, Prov. xix. 15, "An idle soul shall suffer hunger," and Prov. xiii. 4, "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat." We may take up that lamentation, Isa. xxiv. 16, "But I said My leanness, my leanness." Alas! for the many rickety children of the church this day, with their big heads, and lean slender bodies, who are puffed up with their knowledge, but are yet to learn the elements of practical godliness and experimental religion.—Consider,

2. The little desire there is among us after the heavenly rest: Job tells us, chap. vii. 2, "A servant earnestly desireth the shadow, and an hireling looketh for the reward of his work;" so if we were not idle, we would be more desirous of that rest that remains for the people of God. But I fear, if I would speak agreeable to their consciences, they would say, that the Turks' paradise would fit their desires better than the heavenly rest. It was the language of a profane Cardinal, I would quit my part of paradise for present enjoyment; so no doubt many would quit their part of heaven on lower terms, for they only desire heaven, because they love not to go to hell. They care not for the heavenly rest, because they trouble not themselves with the work meet for heaven.—Consider,

3. The little appetite after our spiritual food. The labouring man's work makes him find his stomach, and the Christian labour would make men prize the table covered to them in ordinances. The ordinances are greatly slighted this day, it is lamentable to think how little they are regarded. It is only in the Lord's hand to cure it, by filling folk's hands with heart-work about their soul's case. It is this that would readily make them eager of help.

Lastly, What else means the rank poverty, and rotten rags, which is all the portion of many souls? Rev. iii. 17, "And knowest not, that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." How many are there, who are the genuine offspring of the serpent! on their belly do they go, and dust is their meat; they feed on nothing but the husks of created comforts, wherewith the devil feeds his herds; as for communion with God, and sense of his love, they know no more of them than if they had immortal souls for no other end than to keep their bodies from rotting. They go up and down in the rage of their profanity, and lusts, like so many ghosts in their grave-clothes, busy in nothing but dead works.

I inquire, then, why are ye idle?

1. Is it because ye have nothing to do? Truly, ye have very much.

(1.) Ye have your salvation-work upon your hand: Phil. ii. 12, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." Many have

never begun that work yet; many that have seemed to have begun, are at a stand with it now. Ye were born children of wrath, under the curse of the first covenant; what are ye doing to get free from the wrath to come? There is a burden of guilt lying on you, what are ye doing to get it off? Divers living lusts hanging about you, what are you doing to mortify them? Is there any time to be idle, while that work is not wrought out? Salvation-work is weighty work, for damnation-work is very terrible; ye have that to undo that ye have been doing. Thou hast been weaving thy life into one web of sin, and ye have it to open out again into self-examination, repentance, and bitter mourning.

(2.) Ye have your generation-work to attend upon: Acts xii. 36, "For David, after he had served his own generation, by the will of God fell asleep." God made thee, and sustains thee: some of you in higher, others in lower stations; what have ye done for God, what service to your generation? The sun, moon, and stars are useful in their several places; plants, yea, and beasts, are all useful. For what use art thou in the world? for Him who set thee there, and to those he has set thee among? Assure thyself, God will call thee to answer that question. I fear most of us have that work to begin yet.

2. Do ye think ye will get sleeping to heaven, and that your short-winded wishes for mercy will secure you from the wrath of God? Prov. xiii. 4, "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and has nothing." No; ye must "so run that ye may obtain." Take the kingdom by force; strive, wrestle, else ye are ruined; deceive not yourselves, as if ye would just make a slip of it, out of Delilah's lap into Abraham's bosom. Thou wilt find it a leap out of that bed of sloth into a bed of fire and brimstone, where ye will lie down in eternal sorrow, if you do not seasonably bound to your feet, and put hand to your great work.

3. Do you think the devil is as idle about your souls as you are? No; though ye cannot creep out of your bed of sloth, the devil is going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; though ye will be at no tolerable pains to secure your salvation, he will spare no pains to secure your damnation. Sleep ye, or wake ye, Satan is at your right hand; and if ye be not rowing against the stream, he will carry you down the stream, till he have you in the ocean of God's wrath, where you will never see the shore.—The second inquiry is,

II. Why are "ye" idle, while others are gone to work in the Lord's vineyard? Why do ye sit still, while others are fleeing from the wrath to come? Why are ye sleeping, while others are wrestling with God as for their bare life? Why are ye dressing, eating, and

drinking, while others, moved with fear, are preparing an ark against the day of wrath in these lands, and in the world.

1. Is it because the work in the vineyard is too coarse for your fine fingers? John vii. 48, "Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed on him? but this people that knoweth not the law is accursed." It is lamentable to think how religion is almost grown out of fashion among the fashionable people of this degenerate age; and shocking to see with what contempt some look on seriousness about soul matters, resolving that these silly people as they call them, shall for them enjoy their folly alone. Certainly these men would never have taken their name from one crucified between two thieves, if it had not been the religion of their country. But these that are wise in heart think differently, and glory in the cross of Christ.

2. Is it because you have another thing to do? Many in our day are of Pharaoh's opinion indeed, that religion is only for them that have no other thing ado. Ye are idle; but for them they have their families and farms, &c., to look after. But, man, hast thou not an immortal soul to look after, as well as others? They said of Herod, It is better to be his swine than his son. I am sure, many a man's soul may say to him, Well is your beasts, in comparison of me; for one thought that is spent on my case, there is ten on theirs.

3. Are not ye by nature under the wrath and curse of God, as well as others? Yes; Eph. ii. 3, "And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others:" and therefore let me say to you as the penitent thief to his fellow, Luke xxiii. 40, "Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" Better go to heaven with a few, through all the labours of the Christian life, than to slide away to hell, at your own ease, with the multitude; better weep now, than weep eternally, for it will be no comfort to go to hell with company.

4. Will ye be content to see the labourers set with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and yourselves, with the fellow-loiterers, shut out? you must either set to their work now, or you will see your doom at length, digest it as you will.—I now inquire,

III. Why stand ye "idle?" Have you put on a whore's forehead, and refuse to be ashamed? It would set you better to hide your head, as ashamed in that ye take up room in the world to no good purpose, living in a shameful neglect of your own souls, and the great end of your creation, which was not to sleep away a lifetime on the earth, nor to stand like a barren tree in God's vineyard, drawing away the sap from others, but to glorify God by acting to and for him.

1. Why then stand ye idle in the sight of men? Have ye a mind to tell the world, that go to God's vineyard who will, ye have no mind to stir? embrace God and his service who will, ye will have nothing to do with him, nor it neither? Are you afraid you want witnesses to stand against you before the tribunal of God, to testify how little you valued the working the works of God? The groans of those that warned you to your work, that were grieved at your licentious lives, will witness against you; nay, the stones and timber will cry out of the walls within which you live against you, and witness how little God was in all your thoughts, how little ye ever wrestled with God about your soul's case, and how the prayer, when ye made it, has died in your mouths.

2. Why stand ye idle in the sight of the all-seeing God, who set you down in this world to work your great work? There are many that seem to be diligent workers, but God knows them to be mere idlers; what they work is before men, but their vineyard in the inclosure of their breasts is all overgrown with weeds, and they are at no pains to pluck them up. Have ye bid a defiance to the great Master, whose eyes are upon you in secret, as well as in public, that sees your heart, as well as your outward conversation? Be sure, he will call you to account.—The inquiry, next, is,

IV. Why stand ye "here" idle, even in the market-place, where the great Master has been often calling whom he found here, and you among others, to go and work in his vineyard? and you had not been standing here idle, if you had been willing to work.

1. Why stand ye *here* idle, in a land of gospel light? Isa. xxvi. 10, "In the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord?" If you will serve the devil and your lusts, why do ye not go to the dark places of the earth, and work your works of darkness there? but why must they be brought forth in the face of the sun? why here, in this covenanted land, a land under the sacred bond of solemn covenant to the work of holiness, and the means of holiness; a bond which neither the breaking nor burning of them could loose; and they had never met with that treatment, had not men been as great enemies to piety as to Presbytery. But I dare say, there is no land where men must buy their ease at so dear a rate as in Scotland.

2. Why here, where the Lord is in a special manner calling you to work, setting up his standard, and is about to cover a table for his labourers? will you be idle spectators, while Christ is to be sacramentally crucified before your eyes? will you be idle here, where the Lord is in a special manner calling you to search and try yourselves? If you will stand here idle, it will be a new item, in great

letters, in the accounts of the despisers of Christ, and slighters of the power of godliness in Yarrow*.—I may once more inquire,

V. Why stand ye idle in the "day?" The day brings with it a call to work, though indeed it is the time when the wild beasts enter into their dens, and lie at their ease, Psalm cii. 22, 23. But better to be a beast, than to be like a beast; they that sleep, sleep in the night; but what shall we say of them that cannot be got awakened, even in the day?

1. Then why are ye idle, when ye have a day to work in? No wonder our forefathers were idle, when they were wrapt up in the midnight darkness of Paganism and Popery; but though it was night with them, it is day with us; the sun of the gospel is arisen above our horizon, it has been long up, and will ye be idle in the day? God has not only set up the candle of conscience within you, but has made the sun of the gospel to arise and shine without you, to call you to work, and to let you see to work: Tit. ii. 11, 12, "For the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." Such a day idled away will make a dreadful night!

2. Why are you idle, when you have but a day to work in? John ix. 4, "The night cometh when no man can work." It is to-day, if ye will hear his voice. The time of your life, and the season of grace, is but a day, and that day will soon be over; there is no working in the grave, Eccl. ix. 10. The candle burnt to snuff cannot be lighted again, and time once gone can never be recalled; God will not turn night to day, to let the sluggard see to work, who turned his day to night. Now, when you have but a day, will you idle it away? Ye will, it may be, count it rather by years yet to come; but sure I am, the Spirit of God never learned you that way of counting: James iv. 14, "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow; for what is your life? it is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Psalm xxxix. 5, "Behold, thou hast made my days as an hand-breadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee."—I shall only inquire,

VI. Why are ye idle "all the day?" Will no less than all the day serve? May not the time past suffice? Is it not high time now at length to awake? Is it not the eleventh hour with many of you? and the youngest here knows not but they may be in the last hour of their day. And are ye not afraid your glass run out ere your work be done? Sure it looks very like the very last hour of this church

* The place where this discourse was delivered.

and nation's day: we have had a long day, but now we may say, Jer. vi. 4, "Woe unto us, for the day goeth away, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out." We are threatened with a dreadful eclipse of gospel-light, and a dark night, and we may well conclude as to many of us, that our eyes will never see the breaking of the day again.

As the practical improvement of this subject, I shall only call on you to ponder seriously in your mind, the important inquiries addressed to you;—to pose your consciences closely with them as in the sight of God,—to profit by the instructive lessons afforded from them;—and, in short, that you study a being diligent in business, fervent in spirit, always serving the Lord.

CHRIST'S PRESENCE WITH GOSPEL MINISTERS.*

SERMON XVII.

MATTH. xxviii. 20,

And lo, I am with you alway.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ having, before his death, as a prophet, revealed his Father's mind, and taught the doctrine of salvation, confirmed the same by many miracles; and having in his death, as a priest, offered up himself a sacrifice to atone for the sins of his people, and so brought in an everlasting righteousness; appears here after his resurrection, as a King, ordering the affairs of his own kingdom, which is his church. And, 1*st*, He asserts his power, his supremacy, and headship, ver. 18, given unto him as Mediator. 2*dly*, He gives a commission to his apostles, and in them to their successors in the work of the ministry, to raise up unto him a kingdom out of the kingdoms of the earth, to proclaim his laws among them, and to enjoin obedience to these laws in his name, and to take men solemnly engaged thereto, vers. 19 and 20. Then, in the words of the text, by promise, he secures their encouragement, for the due discharge of their duty, in the words under consideration: "And lo, I am with you alway."—In these words consider,

1. The parties to whom this encouragement does belong: You, that is, (1.) The apostles, to whom these words were immediately directed: (2.) Ordinary ministers, succeeding to them in the ordinary work of the ministry, teaching and baptising, as is clear from

* Delivered before the Synod of Merse and Teviotdale, April, 1712.

the words, in which Christ promiseth to be with them to the end of the world; whereas the formal office of the apostleship was extraordinary, and soon expired. Their mission was immediate; their inspection universal and unconfined; they had an infallible directive power; John xvi. 13, "When he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth." They had the gift of miracles and tongues, and were eye-witnesses of Christ: 1 Cor. ix. 1, "Am I not an apostle? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?" So that to allow any to be their successors in the formal office of the apostleship, as some Prelatists would have the bishops, is to contradict the plain testimony of the scriptures, and of our senses: but the authoritative dispensation of the word, and administration of the sacraments, with the appendant power of discipline and government, which were the substance of the apostolic office, are continued, and will be in the pastoral office to the end of the world; and to these is Christ's presence promised, not excluding such as receive and embrace Christ's word preached by them.—Consider,

2. How, and in what case, they may lay claim to this promised presence; that is in the faithful adherence to, and discharge of their work, put by their Master into their hands. This is the import of the particle, and which knits the work and the encouragement together, ver. 19, "Go ye," &c. If they shall quit their Master's work, they forfeit his promised presence. If they turn servants of men, they must look to them, and not to Christ, for their protection and assistance. If they receive their instructions from any other than our royal Master, they must bid farewell to their part in the lot of his servants. Men that take upon them to teach what Christ never commanded, bringing in error in doctrine, superstition, and the inventions of men in the worship of God, such have need of temporal power and force with them, seeing they have no ground from the word to expect Christ will be with them.—Consider,

3. The encouragement promised: "I am with you," &c. It is Christ's presence that is with them in their work, and who would refuse to go a journey where Christ himself will be companion in travel? if the work be hard his presence is sweet. Christ lays in here a sufficiency for the support of his servants against all the discouragements they may meet with in his work. And there are four things to be noticed in this.

(1.) There is but one encouragement proposed, their difficulties were many. If they looked to their work, it was very hard; they were sent out to grapple with the powers of darkness, to overturn the devil's kingdom, to reform the world sunk in idolatry and monstrous profanity, and to rescue the prey out of the mouth of the

roaring lion. If they looked within themselves, they might see a mass of emptiness, weakness, wants, nothingness, unable of themselves to resist the least temptation. If they looked abroad into the world, they might see that the venturing out into it, on such a design, was a running themselves into a manifest hazard; the wits of the world would treat them as a company of fools, the powers of the world as a company of seditious and pestilent fellows; the multitude of the world would cry, "Away with them, it is not meet that they should live on the earth." But go they must; and here is one answer to all their objections, "I am with you;" that is sufficient, be against you who will, "I am with you," to assist, protect, and bear you through in the work, and to make the word in your mouths do execution; I design to raise up, by your means, a kingdom to myself, maugre all the opposition of men and devils. He does not promise to send armies with them, but to go with them himself—His presence,

(2.) Is proposed as a present thing, an encouragement in hand: "I am with you—to the end;" not I "will be." The expression is emphatical.

[1.] According to the prophetic style, it denotes the utmost certainty his servants shall have his presence in his work to the end of the world, as surely as if it were already done.

[2.] It denotes Christ's presence with his apostles, to be, by his own allowance and appointment, a pledge of his presence with these that, being called, follow out the work that they began in their day: "I am with you;" and let these that follow take it as a certain pledge, "I will be with them too." Let the church be ever so low, there was never any glorious appearance Christ made for her, but she may call it Joseph, for the Lord shall add another.

[3.] It denotes, that Christ's servants, though they should be full of eyes behind and before, yet their eyes are often dim, that they even miss Christ when he is really with them, and so are dejected, because they see not their own mercy: "I am with you," &c.—His presence,

(3.) Is promised to be with them without interruption,—"always," all days, every day; it is an Old Testament phrase, denoting the continuance of a thing without interruption; as Gen. vi. 5, "And that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." He will not leave his servants at his work at any time; they may sometimes want the sense of his presence, but he is with them always, every day, in lightsome days, also in dark and gloomy days, whatever be their case, however hard their lot may be, their peace may be interrupted, but not their Master's presence with them. While they keep at his work, he will be upon their head.—His presence,

(4.) Is promised to be with them without end, till the end of the world; not that he will forsake them then; no, he will then give his faithful servants a place in the upper house, among them that are pillars in the temple of their God: they will enter into the joy of their Lord. But the work of their ministry, as it will continue to the world's end, so then it will be honourably laid by, and Christ will deliver up the kingdom to the Father; so that as long as the work lasts, the encouragement will go along with it.

4. There is in the words the note of attention prefixed, "Lo!" Hereby Christ stirs up and directs his servants to eye his promised presence as their encouragement: Say not ye are left alone; see, I am with you; look not to earth, or to an arm of flesh, for your support, but look upwards to heaven; let not unbelief shut your eyes, but while you have one eye on your work, fix another on your Master, and then you will go on cheerfully. Now, you see that Jesus Christ, the alone King and head of his church, as he has appointed a ministry in his church, and carved out their work for them, and peremptorily appointed them to set about it, so that he has promised them his presence always to the end of the world, in the faithful discharge of the work he has put into their hands; and whatever be the opposition and discouragement they may meet with in it, he wills them to eye his promised presence as sufficient to bear them through in the work, against all discouragements whatsoever. This is the purport of the words of the text, which being thus explained, I shall now apply it.

I. Has Jesus Christ promised his presence to his servants in their work? Let us, then, my fathers and brethren, cleave to our great work, to which we are called of the Lord. Let us steadfastly pursue the ends of our ministry, the advancing of the kingdom of Christ, and the pulling down the kingdom of Satan, according to the commission we have from our Lord and Master. Let us follow our work faithfully, over the belly of all discouragement and opposition which we may meet with in it. Our day is a dark day, and like to be darker; the Lord is angry with the generation, the plague is begun, and it is to be feared there will be a miserable face on the church and land ere it end. A door, we see, is opened, whereby errors in doctrine may crowd in, and set up their heads without control, and superstitious worship and ceremonies, mere inventions of men's own hearts, may be, and are introduced, to mar the beauty of this church in the simplicity of gospel worship, to the dishonour of God, to whom alone it belongs to appoint what way he will be worshipped: and the discipline and government of his house are left to be trampled under foot of profane men, for any assistance we can expect now, but from Him whose institutions they are; which surely

calls us to lift up our eyes unto the heavens, from whence our help is promised. Our times are like to be ensnaring and very trying times to all sorts. The Lord's hand is very heavy by a great sickness and mortality; but the face of the generation looks as if the time were coming, when men shall think those happy who get to their grave in peace. If it should be so, we need not wonder at it. —Allow me to say in favour of the holy providence of God,

1. Providence (if it be so) has not stolen a march upon us; we have had fair warning, both from the word, and particular dispensations, whereby we have been brought, as it were, to the brow of the hill, and the Lord has brought us back, as with that, Hos. xi. 8, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel?" Yet have we not returned to the Lord; we have had the Lord's talents among our hands in peace now these two and twenty years; can it be but God will put both ministers and people to the trial, what they have made of the many preachings, communions, and other means of grace they have enjoyed. I think the light has shone very bright in our day; I dare not say our sacred heat has been proportionable; but ordinarily the saddest strokes follow hard at the heels of the clearest dispensations.

2. Many there are, who have the root of the matter in them, who need to have it awakened with a storm; many sleeping Jonahs in our ship, that are yet sighing and going backward, much filthiness and blood gathered on the daughters of Zion, to be purged with the spirit of judgment and burning.

3. There are many who have taken up the name, but have nothing of the reality of religion, having gathered like summer's vermin in the time of the church's peace; it is but reasonable to expect a storm for the discovery of such, by the loss of whom the church may turn to less bulk, but not be less worth.

4. The case of the generation cries for a stroke, in regard of the horrid contempt of Christ and his gospel at this day. The preaching of the gospel has for several years been a weary work, and very fruitless; and the truth is, we have, as it were, been weary of God. Atheism and horrid profanity abound, and are on the growing hand; these cry for vengeance; enemies have a cup to fill up, they have filled it well formerly, it is like, they have more to do to prepare them for an overthrow. So we have reason to lay our accounts with hardships in our work, and that we may have the walls to build in troublous times; and readily judgment begins at the house of God, and where it will. But let us faithfully follow our Master's interests, and work, and not faint.

And that we may be stirred up hereunto, let us consider,

1. Our Lord Christ will be with us in the faithful discharge of his work, Go ye, "and lo, I am with you." A believing sight of this would steel your foreheads in the Lord's work, with courage and holy resolution, Ezek. iii. 9, "As an adamant harder than flint, have I made thy forehead." Will Christ be with us in the discharge of his work? Then,

(1.) We shall have furniture for our work: Isa. xli. 10, "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament." No man goeth a warfare on his own charges, neither shall our Lord send his soldiers to fight his battles without furniture, more especially when he is upon their head himself; and if our work be more than ordinary, he will make the furniture proportionable: Acts iv. 13, "Now, when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled, and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." May be, we have much ado to get a sermon, when we have all time for study and meditation; what shall come of us then, if we be hurried? Truly, if we have the call, we may look for it being given us in that hour: Matth. x. 19, "For it shall be given you in that same hour, what ye shall speak," with more heavenly oratory in it than at other times. Be it doing-work or suffering-work, he allows furniture, Phil. i. 29, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." Isa. xl. 30, 31, "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that hath no might, he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not weary, they shall walk and not faint."

(2.) We shall have success in our work, that is, the word in our mouth shall accomplish that which Christ pleaseth, Isa. lv. 2, "So shall my word be that goeth out of my mouth, it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it." As to the elect of God, "As many as are ordained to eternal life, believe, however the stream of a graceless generation may go." As to believers, they shall be edified and bettered by it, Mic. ii. 7, "Do not thy words do good to him that walketh uprightly?" and very ordinarily the gospel is like a fire, that spreads most in a windy day. Nay,

the Lord being with us, it will not be absolutely without effect on those that are not one whit bettered by it. It will be at least for a testimony to be produced against them, for our Lord, at the last day. If ye go where they are, the dust of your feet shall witness against them. Salvation was in their offer; it will manifest their unsoundness. The gospel will hang the sign of folly at every wicked man's door, let them entertain it as they will: Mal. iii. 2, "But who will abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap." It will torment them that dwell on the earth. Christ's sword is two-edged, if it do not execution on men's lusts, it will do execution on their souls: Hos. vi. 5, "Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets, I have slain them by the words of my mouth." The word will never leave them as it finds them, but will either make them better or worse.

(3.) We shall have protection in our work: Rev. ii. 1, "Saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." If earth and hell should conspire against us, as long as our Lord has any service for us in the world, we shall be protected. Every one has their day of working, let them trust the Lord as long as that lasts, let them go on in their work, they shall be protected. But when the night comes, appointed by the Lord, wherein he has no more service for us, then, and not till then, shall we be called off; and that night will carry us off whether we be idle or at work.

(4.) We shall have provision: Heb. xiii. 5, 6, "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have, for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee; so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." Let us be at our work, and God will see to our provision: Psalm xxxvii. 3, "Trust in the Lord, and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." Bread has been an old temptation to ministers: Amos vii. 12, 13, "Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread. But prophecy not again any more at Bethel, for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court." But such as were faithful to the Lord have always hazarded the bread, rather than a good conscience: consult ver. 14, to the end of the chapter. Nature is content with little, grace with less; if we cannot trust Christ for our bread, I think we will scarcely be able to trust him with our souls. Miserable is that bread which cannot be got down without straining our conscience; but little bread will go far with a good conscience and God's bless-

ing: let us mind that, Dan. i. 15, "And their countenance did appear fairer and fairer in flesh, than the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat."

(5.) Then, as Elisha said to his servant, 2 Kings ii. 16, "Fear not, for they that be with us, are more than they that be with them." Psalm xciii. 3, 4, "The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice, as the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea." The faith of the Lord's presence in our work would make all opposition of our enemies very contemptible; seeing he is with us that hath the devil in chains, and who sets restraining bounds to the sea, and to the wrath of man, and can in a moment overthrow all the enemies of his work.

(6.) Then he will be against them that are against us in our work. "I am with you." If the world will make themselves parties against you in your work, then, "Lo, I am with you," on your side against them. A faithful ministry has always been the great eyesore of the world; and none can at any time engage in that work, but must lay his account with opposition. But sooner or later it returns on the heads of their enemies, according to that prophetic prayer, which is an awful hedge about Christ's ministers: Deut. xxxiii. 11, "Smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again."

2. Further to engage us to cleave to the Lord's work, let us consider, God will be with his ministers and his church always, even to the end of the world.—Then,

(1.) Lose what we will in the faithful discharge of our work, we will never lose our God: "Lo I am with you *always*." There is nothing we have in the world, but enemies may get their hands upon; but there is one thing which they cannot reach, which is better than all goods, liberty, life; that is, they cannot separate us from the love of our Lord Jesus: Rom. viii. 38, 39, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." There can be no lot so hard, but Christ's presence can sweeten, and make it desirable.

(2.) The world will have an end, and all its smiles and frowns also will be at length laid by for ever. Why then should its smiles flatter, or its frowns fright us from our Lord's work and interest? A little time will carry off both the slothful and faithful servant. But happy that servant, whom, when his Lord and Master cometh, shall find so doing. The solid faith of that life and immortality

brought to light by the gospel, which we preach, would, I believe, make us very peremptory in our resolutions of diligence and faithfulness in our work, over the belly of all opposition in the world.

(3.) Our Lord's work will never lie for want of hands; he will have a church and a ministry to the end of the world. If we lay it by, others will take it up, and write death on our faces, by yoking us to it even in the heat of the day.

(4.) Our Lord and his people shall stand the last upon the earth, his enemies will drop off after one another, he will outlive them all, and stand a conqueror, when they are all routed, and made to quit the field, "Lo, I am with you to the end." His cause will always be victorious at length, and bear down all before it. Who knows but the wheels of providence may be in motion towards the total overthrow of Prelacy, and ceremonies in Britain and Ireland? Providence has often gone to work in as unlikely a way.

III. Has Christ promised to be with us in his own work? O! then, let us not divide among ourselves, let us endeavour unity in the Lord with all our might, and cleave to the work of God in this land, as one man, against Popery, Prelacy, superstition, error, and profanity, and whatsoever is contrary to sound godliness, seeing it is the work laid on us by our Lord in his sacred word, the book of our instructions, and seeing the land has been engaged thereto by solemn covenants with God. If anything ruin this work of the Lord amongst us, it will be our divisions. No doubt there will be means used by our enemies to divide us, knowing well, that if we once break, we are in danger of being broken more and more. Therefore let us pray and act for unity in the Lord; though, like the builders of the wall of Jerusalem, we be separated upon the wall, yet being upon the wall, all at our work, the work will go on. But that which will be our ruin, will be one party throwing down what the other builds up; which will be the case, if in the anger of the Lord we be divided. If the mountain of the ministry fall a burning with the fire of division, all will quickly fall into the sea; but our unity will be our strength: and yet as contemptible as the ministry of this church is at this day in the eyes of many, their unity will make them beautiful as Tirzah, and terrible as an army with banners; yea, even in our evil time, would afford us a glimmering prospect that the Lord would yet fill his house with his glory, Isa. lii. 8, "Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice, with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye when the Lord shall bring again Zion;" Matth. xviii. 19, "Again, I say unto you that if two of you shall agree upon earth, as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which

is in heaven." "Agree," or, or as the word is, sympathize, sound together. I take both these to be an allusion to that sweet passage, 2 Chron. v. 13, "It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals, and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever; that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God." If, then, we have any love to the Lord, to his interests, to his people, to our own souls, let us be one in the Lord's work. Cursed will that carnal interest be, that shall loose a pin in the tabernacle of Zion.

III. Has Christ promised to be with us in his work? Then let us not forget him who is with us, let us love Christ, let us preach Christ; this is our great work at all times, Eph. iii. 8, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Let us beware of legal preaching; let that be the scope of our preaching, which is the great design of the gospel, to discover the corruption of men's nature, and to exalt the riches, power and freedom of grace in Christ Jesus. We have the more need to take heed to this, because the corrupting of the doctrine of the gospel is like to be the temptation of our day.

To conclude: As to you, the people, whether ye be in the Lord's interests or not, ye have heard what ye may apply to yourselves. I think, upon the whole, if ye be wise, ye will say with these, Zech. viii. "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." The profane world will be ready to laugh at this, but both ministers and people must lay their account to be fools in the world's eyes, if they will be wise in the sight of God.

Let none think from what I have said, that I have proposed myself as an example, or that I have forgot myself in this matter. God knows, I look on myself as the weakest and most unfit, for a time of trial, of all the servants of my Lord. But let truth stand and take place, come of the speaker what will. I desire, with you, to fix mine eyes on the promise of His presence, who hath said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

CHRIST'S INVITATION TO THE LABOURING AND HEAVY LADEN.*

SERMON XVII.

MATTH. xi. 28,

Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

THE great and main object of the gospel preaching and gospel practice, is a coming to Christ. It is the first article in Christianity, according to John v. 40, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." It is the connecting chain, 1 Pet. ii. 4, "To whom coming as unto a living stone, ye also as lively stones are built up," &c. And it is the last exercise of the Christian; for when finishing his warfare, the invitation is, Matth. xxv. 34, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." It is virtually the all which God requireth of us: John vi. 29, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." The words of the text are a most solemn and ample invitation which Christ gives to sinners. In them I shall consider,

I. The connection. For which look to verses 25 and 26, compare Luke x. 21, "Jesus rejoiced in spirit." It was a joyful time to him when he made this invitation. He rejoiced in the account of the good news, the success with which the message of the disciples was attended; and in the wise and sovereign dispensation of grace by the Father, which he here celebrates, as also upon the view of his own power; where he shows that all power was lodged in him. The keys of the Father's treasures of grace are in his hand, yea, and whatsoever is the Father's. He also shews, that none could know the Father, but by him, for that is given to him only. He, as it were, opens the treasure door to sinners in the text.—From the connection of this verse, as just now stated, I would observe, that the solemnity of this invitation is most observable. There seems something to be about it more than ordinary. As,

1. It was given in the day of Christ's gladness. He was a man of sorrows, all made up of sorrows. Sorrow, sighing, weeping, groaning, were his ordinary fare. Once indeed we read of his being glad, John xi. 15; and once of his rejoicing, Luke x. 21. And, again, on this occasion, here that thread of sorrow was interrupted,

* This and the following discourses on this subject, were delivered in January and February, 1711.

the sun of joy broke out for a little from under the cloud. His heart was touched, and, as it were, leaped for joy, as the word signifies; compare Matth v. 12, with Luke vi. 23. In the Greek, "he was exceeding joyful." At this extraordinary time and frame, he gives the invitation in the text. Hence infer,

1*st*, That Christ invites sinners with an enlarged heart. Joy enlarges it. His heart is open to you, his arms are stretched wide. You often see him with sorrow and anger in his face, and this works with you that you will not come. Behold him smiling and inviting you now to himself, sending love-looks to lost sinners, from a joyful heart within! Infer,

2*dly*, May I say, the Mediator's joy is not complete, till you come and take a share? The scriptures will warrant the expression, Isa. liii. 11, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." He rejoiceth, but resteth not; but invites sinners to a share, as if all could not satisfy while he goes childless, as to some he has yet an eye upon. Infer,

3*dly*, That nothing can make Christ forget poor sinners, or be unconcerned for them. Sorrow could not do it, joy could not do it; either of these will drive a narrow-spirited man so into himself, as to forget all others. But never was his heart so filled either with sorrow or joy, but there was always room for poor sinners there. When he was entering the ocean of wrath, he remembered them, John xvii; and as our forerunner, he went into the ocean of joy, Heb. vi. 20. Like Aaron, he carried our names on his heart, when he went in to appear before the Lord in heaven, Exod. xxviii. 29.

2. The invitation was given at a time when there was a great breach made in the devil's kingdom, compare Luke x. 17, 18. Christ was now beginning to set up a new kingdom, and he sends out seventy disciples, which was the number of the Sanhedrim at first. He was to bring the people out of the spiritual Egypt, compare Gen. xlvi. 27. The success of the disciples was a fair pledge of the devil's kingdom coming down, and the delivery of sinners. And when the news of it comes, his heart rejoices, and his tongue breaks out in this invitation to the devil's captives, to come away upon this glorious signal. As he had begun to perform this part of the covenant, the Father had begun to perform his, which made his heart leap for joy, and sets him on to cry, that they would all come away, as disciples, vigorously to pursue the advantage which was got, Psalm cx. 7, "He shall drink of the brook in the way, therefore shall he lift up the head. Hence infer,

1*st*, That Christ's heart is set upon the work of sinners' salva-

tion. Ye see no undue haste, but he would have no delays. He holds hands to the work, calling, "Come unto me." He preferred it to the eating of his bread; and what else is the meaning of all the ordinances and providences ye meet with? Infer,

2*dly*, That Christ would have you to come, taking encouragement from the example of others that have come before you. There is a gap made in the devil's prison; some have made their escape by it already, O! will not ye follow? The Lord has set examples for us, both of judgment and of mercy. In the beginnings of the Jewish church, there was an example of God's sovereignty, in the destruction of Nadab and Abihu, Lev. x. 1, 2; and of the Christian church, in the death of Ananias and Sapphira, Acts v; of mercy, in the Jewish church, Rahab the harlot, besides Abraham the father of them all, an idolater, Josh. xxix. 15, compare Isa. li. 2. Then in the Christian church, Paul the blasphemous persecutor, 1 Tim. i. 16. Infer,

3*dly*, That however full Christ's house be, there is always room for more; he wearies not of welcoming sinners; the more that come the better. Christ's harvest is not all cut down at once, nor his house built in a day; if the last stone were laid in the building, the scaffolding of ordinances would be taken down, and the world be at an end. But none of these has hitherto taken place; therefore yet there is room: Joel iii. 21, "For I will cleanse their blood that I have not yet cleansed, for the Lord dwelleth in Zion."

3. This invitation is given on a solemn review of that fulness, of that all which the Father hath lodged in the hand of the Mediator, and that solely. The Father, as it were, no sooner leads him into these treasures, but he says, 'This and this is for you, sinners; here is a treasure of mercies and blessings for you; pardon, life, peace, &c. is all for you. Come, therefore, unto me, the Father has delivered them into my hand, I long to deliver them over to you. Come, therefore, to me, and hence I shall draw my fulness out to you.' Christ had got a kingdom from the Father; it was as yet thinly peopled, and so he calls you to come to him, that ye may be happy in him. He has no will to enjoy these things alone, but because he has them, he would have you to take a share.—I would draw this

Doct. That as the fulness lodged in the Mediator hath a free vent in his heart, so it seeks to diffuse itself into the souls of needy sinners.

Jesus Christ longs to make sinners the better of that all-fulness that is lodged in him by the Father. Christ speaks here to us as

the true Joseph, Gen. xlv. 9—11. As Joseph invited his brethren to come and dwell with him, so Jesus cordially invites us, and promises us a share of the fulness which he himself possesses.—In illustrating the above proposition, I shall only,

I. Assign some reasons.

II. Make some practical improvement.

I. I am to give some reasons of this doctrine, or shew, why Christ is so kind and liberal to sinners.—He is so,

1. Because the Father hath given him for that end: Isa. lv. 4, "Behold, I have given him for a Witness unto the people, a Leader and Commander unto the people. The Father had thoughts of love to man; his love designed to distribute a treasure of mercy, pardon, and grace, to lost sinners; but justice would not allow his giving them immediately out of his own hand; therefore he gives them to the Mediator to distribute. An absolute God being a consuming fire, guilty creatures, as stubble, could not endure his heat, but they would have been burnt up by it; therefore he sets his own Son, in man's nature, as a crystal-wall betwixt him and them; he gives him the Spirit without measure, not only a fulness of sufficiency, but abundance of blessings, is laid up in him; for it hath pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell.—He is so,

2. Because he received a fulness of treasure for that very end: John xvii. 19, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." The first Adam got mankind's stock; he soon lost all. Christ takes the elect's stock in his hand for their security, and so he is given for a covenant of the people; he takes the burden upon him for them, and takes the administration of the second covenant, that it might, with them, be a better covenant than the first.—He is so,

3. Because he bought these treasures at the price of his blood for their behoof: Phil. ii. 8, 9, "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name." The Son of God, who is Lord of all, needed no exaltation in the court of heaven, being equal with his Father; but his design was, to exalt man's nature, to make these that were the children of the devil—friends to heaven, and prepare for them room there: "I go (said he) to prepare a place for you," John xiv. 2. No wonder, then, that he should long to see the purchase of his blood, the fruit of the travail of his soul, come to him.—He is kind and liberal,

4. Because of his love to them. Where true love is, there is an aptness to communicate; the lover cannot see the beloved want what

he has. God's love is giving love: "He so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son," John iii. 16. Christ's love is also such; he loves indeed: "He loved us, and gave himself for us," Gal. ii. 20.—For the improvement of this doctrine, I only add an use of exhortation.

Come to Christ, then, O sinners, upon this his invitation, and sit not his blessed call.—To enforce this, I urge these motives:—

1. There is a fulness in him, all power is given him; want what you will, he has a power to give it to you; the Son of man had power, even on earth, to forgive sins. Grace without you, or grace within you, he is the dispenser of all: John i. 16, "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." He is the great Secretary of heaven, the keys hang at his girdle; he shuts, and none can open; he opens, and none can shut.—Consider,

2. You are welcome to it. He has it not to keep up, but to give out, and to whom but to needy sinners? Even the worst of you are welcome, if you will take it out of his own hand: "If any man thirst, (says he), let him come to me, and drink," John vii. 37.

3. Would you do Christ a pleasure? then come to him, Isa. liii. 11, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." Would you content and ease his heart? then come. It is a great ease to full breasts to be sucked. The breasts of his consolations are full, hear how pressingly he calls you to suck! "Eat, O friends! drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!"

Lastly, Would you fall in with the designs of the Father's and the Son's love, in the mystery of salvation? then come to him. Why is a fountain opened, but that ye may run to it, and wash? Seal not, shut not that to yourselves, which God and Christ have opened.

II. The second thing to be considered in the words is, the persons invited. These are they that labour, and are heavy-laden. The word labour signifies not every labouring, but a labouring to weariness, and so some read it weary. Heavy laden are they that have a heavy burden on their back, which they are not able to bear.

Who are meant by these? I cannot agree with those that restrain these expressions to those that are sensible of their sins and misery, without Christ, and are longing to be rid of the same; but I think it includes all that are out of Christ, sensible or insensible; that is, these that have not had, and those that have had, a law-work upon their consciences. And to fix this interpretation, consider,

1. The words agree to all that are out of Christ, and none have

any right to restrain them. None more properly labour, in the sense of the text, than those that are out of Christ, seeking their satisfaction in the creatures: Eccl. i. 8, "All things are full of labour, man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing." And who have such a burden of sin, and wrath upon their back as they have? The word properly signifies a ship's lading, which, though insensible of it, may yet sink under the weight.—Consider,

2. "The whole world lieth in wickedness," 1 John v. 19, as men in a deep mire, still sinking. Christ came to deliver men out of that case; having taken upon him our nature, Heb. ii. 16, he caught hold (Greek) as one doth of a drowning man, even as he did of Peter when sinking, Matth. xiv. 31. And what are the invitations of the gospel, but Christ putting out his hands to sinking souls, sinking with their own weight. Consider,

3. That the words, in other scriptures, are without controversy applied to the most insensible sinners. See what labour and weariness! Hab. ii. 13, "Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts, that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?" In the most solemn invitation to Christ in all the Old Testament, the word "labouring" is so used: Isa. lv. 2, "Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" Luke xi. 46, "Ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne." "Lade" is the same Greek word used in the text. Isa. i. 4, "Ah! sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity." Were they sensible? far from it; for ver. 3, "Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." And, 2 Tim. iii. 6, it is said, "Silly women, laden with sins, led away with divers lusts."

4. Consider the parallel text: Isa. lv. 1, "Ho, every one that thirsteth;" where by the thirsty is not so much understood those that are thirsting after Christ, as those that are thirsting after happiness and satisfaction, seeking to squeeze it out of the creature; for the thirsty invited are the same that are spending their labour for that which satisfieth not. But those that are thirsting after Christ are not such.

5. If the words be a restriction of the call to sensible sinners, then the most part of sinners are excluded. If they are not included, sure they are excluded; and if the words are restrictive, sure they are not included; and then, so far from being the truth of the text, that it is no gospel-truth at all; for all, without exception, that hear the gospel, are called to come to Christ; Rev. iii. 20, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if *any* man hear

my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." And if any "one" be not called, they have no warrant to come; and if so, unbelief is not their sin, as in the case of the Pagans, which is absurd.

Lastly, This is a most solemn invitation to come to Christ; and if I say the most solemn, there is some ground for it by what is said before. And shall that be judged restrained, that so expressly and solemnly comes from that fulness of power lodged in Christ, more than that just quoted? Rev. iii. 20, where there is no shadow of restriction. Besides, this restriction may well be a snare to an exercised soul, which ordinarily, by a legal disposition in all, will not allow that they may come to Christ, because sin is not heavy enough to them. But although sinners will never come to Christ till they see their need of him, yet this I will ever preach, that all, under pain of damnation, are obliged to come to him, and that they shall be welcome on their coming, be their case what it will; that such as are willing to come ought not to stop on a defect of their sensibleness, but come to him, that they may get a true sense of sin unto repentance; for he is "exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins," Acts v. 31. He is to give, not to stand and wait, till "folly bring repentance with it."

III. Consider in the words, to what the labouring and heavy-laden are invited. They are invited to come to Jesus; that is, to believe on him, to take him as he offers himself in the gospel.

IV. Observe the encouragement afforded to influence a compliance with this invitation. Rest is promised to them here and hereafter: "I will give you rest."—We may afterwards open up these things more largely, in handling the following doctrinal propositions, which we draw from the words thus explained, viz.

Doct. I. That sinners, while out of Christ, are engaged in a wearisome labour.

Doct. II. That all who are out of Christ are under a heavy load or burden, which by all their labours they cannot shake off.

Doct. III. Whatever sinful and vain labours sinners are engaged in, whatever be the loads which are lying on them, they are welcome to Christ; nay, he calls, invites, and commands them to come unto him.

I shall consider these in order.—I begin with Doct. I. That sinners, while out of Christ, are engaged in a wearisome labour. Were you condemned, till you forsook your lusts, to row in the galleys, chained to the oars, to dig in mines, never to see the

light of the sun, it were not to be compared to this wearisome labour, while out of Christ. If sinners feel it not, it is because they are not at all themselves. It is a truth, though a sad one, Isa. lv. 2, that they "labour for that which satisfieth not;" (in the Hebrew,) they "labour to weariness." Eccl. x. 15, "The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them; because he knoweth not how to go to the city."

In discoursing this point, we may inquire,

I. What it is that sinners out of Christ are labouring for.

II. How it is, that men out of Christ labour for happiness and satisfaction.

III. What sort of labour it is that they have in these things.

IV. Why sinners labour in these things for satisfaction, and do not come to Christ.

V. Make some practical improvement.

Let us inquire,

I. What it is that sinners out of Christ are labouring for. No man engageth in a labour, but for some end he proposeth to himself. Though the devil is oversman of these labourers, yet he does not make them go like clocks, without a design. Every one that labours proposes some profit to himself by his work, and so do these; there is always something, either really or seemingly good, that men seek in all their labours. So, in a word, it is happiness and satisfaction that they are labouring for, as well as the godly. For, consider,

1. The desire of happiness and satisfaction is natural to man; all men wish to see good. It is not the desire of good that may satisfy, that makes the difference between the godly and the wicked, but the different ways they take: Psalm iv. 6, 7, "There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." In whatever case a man is on earth, in heaven or hell this is still his desire; and he must cease to be a man, ere he can cease to desire to be a happy man. When that desire, mentioned Eccl. xii. 5, shall fail, this desire is still fresh and green; and it is good in itself. Our Lord supposeth this in the text, and therefore he promises to them what they are seeking, rest, if they will come to him.

2. This desire is the chief of all: all other things are desired for it. All men's desires, however different, meet here, as all the rivers meet in the sea, though their courses may be quite contrary. Therefore this is what they labour for. The devil has some labourers at his coarse work, others at the more fine, but they all meet in their end.

3. Defects and wants are interwoven with the very nature of the creature; and the rational creature finds that it cannot be, nor is self-sufficient. Hence it seeks its happiness without itself, and must do it, to satisfy these natural desires.

Lastly, Seeing, then, man's happiness is without himself, it must be brought in, which cannot be done without labour. It is proper to God to be happy in himself; but every creature must needs go out of itself to find its happiness; so that action is the true way to it, that is, rest cannot be found but in the way of action and labour, and because they are not in the right way, it is wearisome labour.

Let us inquire,

II. How it is that men out of Christ labour for happiness and satisfaction. Here it is impossible for us to reckon up particulars, and that in regard,

1. Of the different dispositions of men, and the various, as well as contrary opinions, concerning what may make a man happy. Varro says, there were two hundred and eighty opinions touching the chief good in his time. It is true, Christianity, in the profession of it, hath fixed this point in principle; but nothing less than overcoming grace can fix it in point of practice. The whole body of Christless sinners are like the Sodomites at Lot's door; all were for the door, but one grasps one part of the wall for it, another another part, not one of them found it. The world is, as the air in a summer-day, full of insects; and natural men, like a company of children, one running to catch one, another, another, while none of them is worth the pains. One runs to the bowels of the earth, another to the ale-house, &c.—It is impossible to determine here,

2. In regard of men's still altering their opinions about it, as they meet with new diappointments. Like a man in a mist, seeking a house in a wilderness, when every bush, tree, &c. deceives, till, by coming near, he is undeceived. "O (thinks the man), if I had such a thing, I would be well." Then he falls to labour for it; may be he never gets it, but he ever pursues it. If he gets it, he finds it will not do, for as big as it was afar off, yet it will not fill his hand when he grips it; but it must be filled, or no rest, hence new labour to bring forth just a new disappointment: Isa. xxvi. 18, "We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind."—It is difficult also,

3. Because they cannot tell themselves what they would be at. Their starving souls are like the hungry infant, that gapes, weeps, crys, and sucks every thing that comes near its mouth, but cannot tell what it would have, but is still restless till the mother set it to

the breast. It is regenerating grace that does that to the soul. The Hebrew word for believing, comes from a root that signifies to nurse, as if faith were nothing but a laying of the soul on the breasts of Christ, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead. The scripture holds him out as the mother that bare them; hence his people are called, Isa. liii. 11, "The fruit of the travail of his soul." He also is their nourisher: hence he says, Isa. i. 2, "I have nourished and brought up children." The breasts of the church, Isa. lxvi. 11, at which they are to suck and be satisfied, are no other than Christ. But, in the general, to see from whence it is that men out of Christ go about to squeeze out their happiness, see Psalm iv. 6, 7, quoted above. From which observe two things.

(1.) That it is not God, for these two are set in opposition; go to as many doors as they will, they never go to the right door; hence it follows, that it is the creatures out of which they labour to draw their satisfaction: "Having forsaken the fountain of living waters, they hew out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."

(2.) That it is good they are seeking out of them; and indeed men can seek nothing but under that notion, though for the most part they call evil good, and good evil. All good is either profitable, pleasurable, or honest; these, then, are all that they are seeking, not from God, but from themselves, or other creatures. The two former have respect to the cravings of men's desires, the latter to the cravings of the law. And seeing it is not in God that they seek their happiness and satisfaction, I infer hence, that all out of Christ are labouring for their happiness and satisfaction in one or both of these ways, either from their lusts, or from the law; and this I take to be the very labour intended in the text. For which consider these three things:—

1*st*, That all natural men have two principles in them, (1.) Corruption; (2.) Conscience. Both crave of them: Rom. ii. 15, "Which shew the work of the law, written in their heart, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another." Hence, because they do not mortify the lusts, they must be fed or no rest; and therefore they labour for their lusts to satisfy them. Then, because they fly not to Christ for the satisfaction of their conscience, they go to the law.

2*dly*. The bulk of natural men in the world have still been of two sorts: (1.) The profane party; (2.) The formal party. These have still been among Jews, Pagans, and Christians; the former labouring most in lusts, the latter in the law.

3*dly*, Adam left us with two yokes on our necks, (1.) Of lusts;

(2.) Of the law. The last was of God's putting, but he gave strength with it to bear it; Adam took away the strength, but left the yoke, and put on a yoke of lusts beside; and in opposition to both these, Christ bids us come and take on his yoke, which is easy, and his burden, which is light," Matth. xi. 29.

As to the labour they have in their lusts, they call them, and they run after them. These infernal devils in the heart drive the swine of this world into the sea of perdition; nay, turn the soul itself into a very sea, that cannot rest: Isa. lvii. 20, "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." They labour like madmen for satisfaction to them, and no calm, no rest, till the soul come to Christ.

1. They labour hard in the lusts of profit: 1 John ii. 16, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." The profits of the world are the cisterns they squeeze for satisfaction; they bewitch the hearts of them that have them, and of them that want them; they fly after them with that pains and labour the ravenous bird doth after its prey: Prov. xxiii. 5, "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches take to themselves wings, they fly away, as an eagle towards heaven." The strength of men's desires, and the cream of their affections, are spent on them; their happiness depends upon its smiles, their misery upon its frowns; if gone, their god is gone. Hence is that verified, Hab. ii. 13, "They labour in the very fire, and weary themselves for very vanity," like a poor fool running to catch a shadow. They have hard labour in lawful profits, how to get them, and how to keep them, but hardest of all, how to squeeze satisfaction out of them; there they labour in the very fire; they labour also in unlawful profits. The soul is an empty thing; lusts are ill to guide; conscience must make a stretch now and then, for the satisfaction of lusts; and the man will leap over the hedge, though the serpent will bite him: 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10, "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil." Hence the carnal man, I may say, never gets up his back, but on his belly doth he go, and labours, as if he were a slave condemned to the mines, to dig in the bowels of the earth; like the blind moles, his constant labour is in the earth, and he never opens his eyes till he is dying. He has his lade of thick clay upon his back, Hab. ii. 6, as the fruit of his labouring in the fire. There is thus a labouring and heavy-laden party. Others take the world in their hand as a staff, nay, tread on it as the dirt,

and they get it as a burden on their back; while guilt, many times contracted in the getting of it, whether by oppression, cheatery, or neglecting of the soul for it, is like a sore back under the load, that makes them ready in despair to throw it away, but they know not how to subsist without it.

2. They labour in lusts of pleasure; they go about as the bee, extracting the sweet out of the creatures for their own satisfaction; this and the former usually go together. Profits and pleasures are the world's two great baits, at which all natural men are constantly leaping, till they are caught by the hook, and flung out into the fire of wrath: Prov. ix. 17, 18, "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. But he knoweth not that the dead are there, and that her guests are in the depths of hell." Pleasure is a necessary ingredient in happiness, and man cannot but seek it; hence God proposeth it to men in himself, who is the fountain of all sweetness: Psalm xvi. 11, "Thou wilt shew me the path of life, in thy presence there is fulness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." But blind man makes the creature-sweetness his idol, and puts it in the room of God; for "they are lovers of pleasures, (in this sense), more than lovers of God," 2 Tim. iii. 4. It is no fault to seek our profit; for, Heb. xi. 26, "We are to have respect unto the recompense of the reward." Nor to seek what may be sweet to the soul; for we may wish our souls to be "satisfied with marrow and fatness," Psalm lxiii. 5. But the natural man's misery and sin both is, he forsakes God, and fastens on the breasts of the creatures for these things.

Now, there are two breasts of the creatures at which men may be sucking.

(1.) The breast of lawful comforts. Natural men fall on these, instead of the breasts of God's consolations, and labour, though in vain, to squeeze happiness and satisfaction out of them, and that with the greatest eagerness. They are lawful in themselves, but they often press so hard, that they draw out blood instead of milk from them; and are like men working at a flinty rock, to bring out water, instead of which they get fire flashing in their face, as in that case, Judges ix. 15, when "fire came out of the bramble to devour the cedars of Lebanon."—There is,

(2.) The breast of unlawful comforts, Prov. ix. 17, "Stolen waters are sweet." Many seek their satisfaction in those things which they ought not so much as to desire, and fill themselves with what God forbids them so much as to taste. O! the misery of Christless sinners, to whom both lawful and unlawful comforts are effectual snares for ruin. Like mad beasts, if they abide within the hedge, they tear

up all to the red earth, which doth not yet satisfy. But they most usually break over all hedges; and they do so, because the creature can never fully answer the craving desires and hungry appetite, and yet, after all, they will not come to Christ, that they may have rest.

These breasts of the creatures have many springs, divers lusts and pleasures, Titus iii. 3, and these are served; men must labour in them as a servant at his master's work. I shall reduce them to these two heads, mentioned, Eph. ii. 3, the desires of the flesh and of the mind.

1*st*, They labour for satisfaction and happiness in the pleasures of the flesh. And,—1. In sensuality. This was the door man first went to, after he had left God. And since the world was turned upside down by that means, the soul has lain downmost, and the flesh uppermost, so that they are all sensual, as Jude says, ver. 19, that have not the Spirit; and the soul is made drudge of the body. The belly is a god, and the pleasures of the flesh are squeezed for satisfaction; all the senses are set a-working for it, and yet can never do enough: Eccl. vi. 7, "All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled." Many arts and trades are found out to bring this to perfection, though all in vain; and there is no end of these things, which are of no use but to please the flesh, which, like the grave, never says it has enough.—2. Ease, sloth, and quiet, which is a negative kind of sensuality: Luke xii. 19, "The rich man said, Thou has goods laid up for many years, soul, take thine ease." All to please the flesh. This costs hard labour many times to the soul, many a throw conscience gets for the sake of this idol, what by neglect of duties, what by going over the belly of light to shun what is grieving to the flesh, as if men's happness consisted in the quiet enjoyment of themselves.—They labour for satisfaction,

2*dly*, In the desires of the mind, and pleasures thereof. These, if they terminated on right objects, and were sought in a right manner, it would be well, for our true happiness consists in the soul's enjoyment of God; but in the natural man all is confusion. And,—1. There is much labour in seeking happiness in the pleasures of the judgment. This is the snare of thinking graceless men; this was among the first doors men went to when they turned from God: Gen. iii. 5, "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." And there is hard labour without a figure, for the punishment of that: Eccl. i. 13, "And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven; this sore travail God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised there-

with." And what comes it to at length? to no rest; for, ver. 18, "In much wisdom there is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow." Here is fulfilled, Eccl. x. 15, "The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city." Whereas, would they go to Christ, they would be in a fair way to get what they are seeking; for, John xvii. 3, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." "In whom are hid, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Col. ii. 3. There is labour,—2. In pleasures of the fancy. What else are all the lusts of the eye? all the abundance of the riches for which men labour so much? Eccl. v. 11, "When goods increase, they are increased that eat them; and what good is there to the owner thereof, saving the beholding of them with his eyes? all they can think or say is, These are mine." What is honour, credit, and the like, but a tickling of our fancy, with the fancies of others about us, adding nothing to real worth? And how busy is the soul oftentimes in that, Eccl. vi. 9, "Better is the sight of the eyes, than the wandering of the desire, (Heb.) "walking of the soul." This is also vanity and vexation of spirit. What satisfaction is sought in imagination, sins, lust, revenge, and the like? what restlessness there, 2 Pet. ii. 14, "Having eyes full of adultery, that cannot cease from sin." How busy is the soul oftentimes in imagination, of wealth, and the like, as if, when it had tried all other means in vain, it would try, while awake, to dream itself happy! "The thoughts of my heart," says Job, chap. xvii. 11, (Heb.) "the passions of my heart," "are broken off."

3. The other thing in which natural men labour for rest, is the "law:" compare the text, Matth. xi. 28, with vers. 29 and 30. Emphatically is that labour described, Rom. x. 3, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness." "Go about;" the word signifies, a seeking, like a disputer in the schools, or a tormenter of one upon the rack; to establish, to make it stand itself alone. They seek to make it stand, as men that will have a stone to stand on end, which at the same time is ever coming down on them again. Why all this? because it is their own: "Have not submitted." Christ offers a righteousness; but to take it, is to them a point of submission, against which they labour, as the untoward bullock against the yoke. They will never let it on till God break the iron sinew of the neck, Isa. xlviii. 4.

To confirm this, consider,

1. All men desire to be happy, and no man can get his conscience

quite silenced, more than he can get the notion of a God quite erased from his mind: Rom. ii. 14, 15, "They are a law unto themselves, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or excusing one another." Peace of mind is a natural desire, which none can divest himself of. Hence it follows, men cannot but seek inward peace; and though they may set themselves to murder conscience for that end, yet seeing it will not do for them totally, they do of necessity take some other way. There never was but two ways, either Christ or the law. The former they reject, therefore it follows, they follow the latter. Let us view this in three sorts of natural men.

(1.) In the profane person, who has not so much as a form of godliness; it is hardest to be found in them. But none so profane, but it will readily be found they have some one good thing or another about them, and sometimes they will compliment their consciences with a denial of satisfaction to their lusts, which is a labour so much the harder to them, as they are under the greater power of lusts. This sure they do not with an eye to make themselves miserable, but happy that their consciences may excuse them, Rom. ii. 15. Excusing, even those that are most at the devil's will, and taken captive, as hunters who take their prey alive, 2 Tim. ii. 26. Importing still a conscience labouring in the law, though lusts, as being stronger, do for the most part prevail.—Let us view this,

(2.) In the formal natural man: some of whom labour in the duties of morality; others in those of religion: who are at no small travail in the law, if we consider it all for nought. Like the Pharisee, Luke xviii. 11, they take not the gospel-way, yet they labour in the law. Sure lusts remain in them in their life and vigour. It surely costs labour so far to restrain them.—Let us view this,

(3.) In the awakened sinner. I am not for excluding those out of the text, but only that it be not restrained to them: Acts ii. 37, "Now, when they heard this, they were pricked to the heart, and said unto Peter, and the rest of the apostles, what shall we do?" These mend their hands at this hard labour, and ofttimes labour so to keep the law, that they are both by themselves, and others taken for saints of the first magnitude, and yet it is but still in the law, till converting grace come, and shed them off the old root.

2. It is natural for men to labour in the law for happiness, and therefore, till nature be overcome by grace, men will not be put off it. The law was Adam's covenant, who, with his children, were to work and win heaven by their works; though they have lost their father's strength, yet they will keep their father's trade; though their stock be small, yet they will keep the merchandising for hea-

ven, and give God good works for good wages. See nature speaking out of him, Matth. xix. 16, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" And it often happens, that they who have fewest of good works lay the greatest stress upon them.

3. Consider how this practice has been formed into principles, in the face of the sun of the gospel. Never was an error yet vented in principle, but in compliance with some corruption of the heart; therefore is that made the characteristic of true doctrine, that it is according to godliness, 1 Tim. vi. 3. No sooner was the gospel preached, than Cain sets up for works in opposition to faith: Gen. iv. 4, 5, "And the Lord had respect to Abel, and to his offering; but unto Cain and his offering he had not respect." Paul gives the reason: Heb. xi. 4, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." In Abraham's family, to whom the promise of righteousness was more clearly made, Hagar bears her son; compare Gal. iv. 24. When the people were in Egypt, the generality of them knew nothing else. They had curtailed the law so very short, as all that labour in it do, that they thought they kept all very well: Rom. v. 13, "For until the law, sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed, when there is no law." For that cause God gave them the law, as in Exod. xx. Gal. iii. 29, "The law was added because of transgressions;" it pravailed in the days of the prophets, in Christ's days, and from the beginning of the Christian church to this day;—hence our swarms of Papists, &c.—Consider,

4. They turn the very gospel into law, as unclean vessels sour the sweetest liquor that is put in them. What a real gospel was the ceremonial law to the Jews, holding up blood, death, and translation of guilt, from them to the substitute, every day before their eyes in their sacrifices; But, Rom. ix. 11, "Their very table (that is, their altar, so call, Mal. i. 12,) became a snare;" and they went about these things, as if by them they would have made up what was wanting in their observation of the moral law. Just so was it turned in Popery; yea, and alas! among Protestants it is found thus soured, to whom the gospel is the law, and faith, repentance, and new obedience, the fulfilling of the law. But would to God it stood in principles only; but as sure as every unrenewed man is out of Christ, as sure even these natural men, whose heads are set right in this point, in their hearts and practice the very gospel is turned into law, and their obedience, their very faith and repentance, such as it is, is put in the room of Christ. For practice, when fairly traced, will show the principles from which it proceeds.

Lastly, Consider, though all would be saved, yet natural men are

enemies to the gospel-way of salvation: 1 Cor. i. 23, "It is to the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness." They must then be in love with the law, for there is no mids; yea, so cleave they to it, that nothing but death can part Adam's sons and it, and this even a violent death in a day of God's power: Psalm cx. 3; Rom. vii. 4, "Ye also are become dead to the law;" (Greek,) "deadened, killed, or put to death." As long as a soul sees how to shift without Christ, it will never come to him; add to this, that the godly find the remains of this principle in them to struggle against. Self-denial is the first lesson Christ gives, but they are a-learning it all their days. If it is thus in the green tree, what shall it be in the dry?

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

MATTH. xi. 28,

Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

WE are now,

III. To inquire, What sort of a labour sinners have in these things? For the sake of plainness, it will be necessary to consider this labour, 1*st*, As it respects their lusts; 2*dly*, As it respects the law.—We are,

1*st*, To consider this labour of sinners, as it respects their lusts, their going up and down among the creatures, extracting from them a comfort and pleasures, which they take for happiness.—I shall here show the properties of this labour, and thus confirm the point, that they are engaged in a wearisome labour.

1. It is hard labour, and sore toil: Jer. ix. 5, "They weary themselves to commit iniquity." None win the devil's wages for nought, they eat no idle bread where he is taskmaster, and they must needs run, whom he drives. The devil's yoke is of all yokes the heaviest. —To clear this point, consider,

(1.) What the Scriptures compare this labour in lusts unto; whereby it will appear hard labour.—It compares it,

[1.] To the labour of a man going to a city and not knowing the way: Eccl. x. 15, "The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city." That is hard labour, as many know by experience. Many a weary foot such must

go, many a hardship they must endure, and so must these in pursuit of happiness.—It compares it,

[2.] To a labouring in the fire: Hab. ii. 13, "Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts, that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?" How hard is their labour that lieth about a fire! what sweat! what toil! Jer. vi. 29, "The billows are burnt, the lead is consumed of the fire, the founder melteth in vain, for the wicked are not plucked away." But how much more hard in the fire! As when a house is on fire, and men in it, labouring to preserve that which the fire consumes, even among their hands. These labour, 1*st*, In the fire of lusts, that inflames the heart, and scorches the very soul, Prov. vi. 27, 28, "For by means of a whorish woman, a man is brought to a piece of bread, and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life. Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?" 2*dly* In the fire of divine wrath that is kindled by the former: Isa. ix. 18, "For wickedness burneth as the fire, it shall devour the briers and thorns, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forest, and they shall mount up like the lifting up of smoke." This consumeth what they are working for in the other; so that when, like the spider, they have spun out their own bowels for a covering, yet it is by far too narrow, and they have but wearied themselves for very vanity.—It is compared,

[3.] To labouring under a burden, as in the text itself, which will not let the man get up his back. They are the devil's drudges, labouring under that load that will crush them at last, if they do not, as in Psalm lv. 22, cast their burden on the Lord, that he may sustain them. They are laden with divers lusts, which lie on them as a burden on the weary beast, which weary them indeed, but they are bound on as with bands of iron and brass.—It is compared,

[4.] To the labour of a soldier in war; they watch for iniquity as a sentry at his post: Isa. xxix. 20. The natural man himself is the very field of battle: Jam. iv. 1, "From whence come wars and fightings among you, come they not hence, even of your lusts which war in your members?" The war itself you may see described in the three following verses. Who cannot but be well laboured with the feet of men and horse in that confusion? Though there be not grace and corruption to war in them, there are lusts, and lusts opposed to one another, lusts and light also.—It is compared,

[5.] To the labour of the husbandman in plowing: Hos. x. 13, "Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity." They devise wickedness, which the Hebrew calls plowing it: "Devise not evil against thy neighbour," Prov. iii. 29. "An ungodly man diggeth up evil, and in his lips there is a burning fire," Prov. xvi. 27.

It is compared,

[6.] Not to insist on more, to the labour of a woman in child-birth: Psalm vii. 4, "Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood." What pangs do raging lusts create to the soul? What cords of death does it straiten with? No small toil at conceiving of sin, and bearing it in the heart, and bringing it forth; but nothing in the abominable brat to satisfy the soul after all.

(2.) It is hard labour, if you consider that eminent emblem of our natural state, the Egyptian bondage. Their deliverance out of Egypt, was typical of their spiritual deliverance by Christ, and so that must needs signify man's natural state; concerning which it may be remarked, (1.) That as the children of Israel went down to Egypt in the loins of their parents, so we in Adam.—(2.) As the deliverance was wrought by the angel of the covenant, by the hands of Moses the lawgiver, and Aaron the priest, so this by the law and the gospel.—(3.) As Pharaoh opposed the children of Israel to the utmost, so the devil opposeth here. Pharaoh was "the great dragon which lieth in the midst of his rivers, which said, my river is mine own, and I have made it for myself," Ezek. xxix. 3; and was a type of that great red dragon, mentioned Rev. xii. 3, &c. But for that which concerns this point, see Exod. v. There you will find persons labouring, and heavy laden, vers. 4, 5. It is hard labour to satisfy lusts, the devil's taskmasters: Eph. ii. 2, 3, "He worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind." The Israelites had their tasks doubled, to put religion out of their heads and hearts, Exod. v. 10. Lusts also must be satisfied, but wherewith to do it is withheld, as straw was from the Israelites, ver. 11. They are scattered up and down among the creatures for it, but can never squeeze out a sufficiency for them, even as the Israelites could not find stubble enough to prepare their bricks, vers. 12, 13, 14. If any appearance of deliverance, the labour is made the harder. Says Paul, Rom. vii. 9, "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died."—It is hard labour,

(3.) If ye consider the effects this labour hath, 1*st*, On the souls of men. The minds of men have a toilsome task, where sin is on the throne: Isa. v. 20, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil, that put darkness for light, and light for darkness, that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." That soul must needs be in a continual fever, while inordinate affections are in their strength, as in all out of Christ. A fermentation of lusts cannot but make a tossed mind. Anxiety and cares of the world stretch

the mind, as on tenter hooks. A conceived flight, like that of Ahab, 1 Kings xxi. 4, sets the proud man's heart in a fire of wrath and revenge, and squeezes the sap out of all their enjoyments, as in the instance of Haman, Esth. v. 9, 13. Envy slays the silly one, lust strikes as a dart through the liver; anger, malice, discontent, and the like, make a man his own executioner; they are tossed between hopes, fears, and vanity, tumbled hither and thither with every wind of temptation, as a ship without either pilot or ballast. 2*dly*, Even the body is ofttimes hard put to it in this labour. The covetous rises early, eats the bread of sorrow for what is not; the drunkard uses his body worse than his beast. More bodies have fallen sacrifices to lust, one way or another, than ever fell by the hardships either in or about religion.

2. It is base, mean, and abject labour: See Jer. ii. 21, compared with vers. 23, and 24. Were we to die like beasts, we might live like beasts, with our souls grovelling still downward on the earth. If the soul had been so narrow, as to be satisfied with less than an infinite good, he had not spoke like a fool, who said to his soul, Luke xii. 19, "Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry," when his barns were full; in that case, the swine and his soul might have fed together. But we have immortal souls, capable of enjoying an infinite good, and such working in the earth must needs be a base labour for a heaven-born soul, which God breathed into the formed dust, but gave not to be drowned in a mass of flesh and blood, nor to be only as salt, to keep the body a while from rotting.

3. It is a constant labour. The sea rests sometimes, the carnal heart never: Isa. lvii. 20, "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Lusts are ever craving, never say they have enough; they are rolling the stone to the top of the hill, which still comes down on them again and again, and creates new labour; see Psalm lxxviii. 18.—20, 29, 30. Two things make it a continual labour. 1*st*, Continual disappointments. These they cannot miss, seeing there is no satisfaction to be had in the creatures; yet their soul still craves, hence no rest, but are urged on to work again: Isa. lvii. 10, "Thou art weary in the greatness of thy way, yet saidst thou not, There is no hope." Men are like the silly doves without heart, who still go to the same nest where they have been herried never so often before, and will even beg there, where they have got a thousand nay-says. 2*dly*, What is got in them enlarges the desire, instead of satisfying it; the more that lusts are fed, the more they require to maintain them. Sin is an insatiable tyrant; to labour in its service, is but to cast oil into the flame. The dropsy-thirst can never be quenched.

4. It is vain labour, they can never reach the end of it: Isa. lv. 2, "Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" They shall as soon fill a triangle with a circle, as the heart with such things; the grave shall sooner give back its dead, than the lusts of the heart say, It is enough. It is impossible to find satisfaction in these things, for they are not suitable to the soul, more than stones for the nourishment of the body. The body gets its nourishment from the earth, because it is of the earth; the soul is from heaven, and so its satisfaction must come from thence. The things of the world cannot satisfy the soul, because they have no word of divine appointment, to be the staff of that bread which nourishes it; without this, grass could no more satisfy the beasts, nor bread the hunger of man, than sand: Matth. iv. 4, "Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." God has kept this as his own prerogative, to satisfy the soul, incommunicable to the creatures conjunctly or separately.

Lastly, It is notwithstanding costly labour; for time that is precious is spent on it, which men should husband well, Eph. v. 16, "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." By time well improved, we might attain true happiness; time once gone can never be recalled. But, ah! what precious hours are cast away on these things, which might be improved in trading for heaven.—It is costly, because the gifts of the mind are thrown away on it. Reason makes us differ from the beasts, but by the abuse of it men make themselves worse than the beasts: Jer. viii. 7, "Yea, the stork in the heaven, knoweth her appointed times: and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming: but my people know not the judgment of the Lord." Men's minds are employed not to know God, but other things; their choice also is not fixed upon him, their affections are bestowed on other things.—Finally, it is costly, because the outward good things of the body, and estate in the world, are bestowed upon it. Health and strength go in the pursuit of vanity, and in the service of their lusts, yea, are sacrificed many times on the altar of intemperance and sensuality. Riches, power, honours, as the feeding of the horse does, make people kick against him who lays these things to their hands. Yea, to crown all, the soul itself is thrown away upon it: Matth. xvi. 26, "For what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Men seeking vanity, lose what is most excellent; and it is dear bought that is purchased at that rate.—I shall now consider what is meant by,

II. A labouring in the law. And to this most of what has been said may be applied; and besides it may occur afterwards. I shall only say these two things anent it at present.

1. It is most hard labour, for it requires most exact obedience, under pain of the curse: Gal. iii. 10, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them." Nothing but perfect obedience is accepted, according to the law; and for the least failure, it dooms the sinner to death. Now, no man can perform this, and yet so foolish are men, that they think to please God with their works. Again,—it is hard, because the law neither promiseth nor giveth strength. God gave Adam strength to perform, he lost it, the law does not restore it; so that in this case they must make the brick, and no straw is laid to their hands. This makes hard work, and so, by the Spirit, it at length breaks the heart of the elect, and makes them die to the law, as a wife to a rigorous husband, Gal. ii. 19.

2. It is a vain and useless labour. There are much pains, and yet no gain, in this labour. It is vain, in respect of the soul thriving; they that labour in the law do but sow their seed in the sand; all they reap is wind, which may puff them up, but cannot nourish. Why so many barren dry professors? but because they are not trading with Christ, but with the law. Men go to duties, and rest in them; the pipe is laid short of the fountain.—It is vain, in respect of acceptance with God. It is thankless work, for it supersedes the commandment to believe: John vi. 29, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." It is a sad word, Rom. ix. 31, 32, "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law." Turtles were accepted on the altar at Jerusalem, when bullocks were rejected on those at Dan and Bethel.—Farther, it is vain, in respect of answering the demands of the law, Gal. iii. 10. Our curtailed obedience will not answer the measuring reed of the law; it demands satisfaction for what is past, and perfect obedience for what is to come.—Finally, it is vain, in respect of salvation. The way to heaven by the first covenant is blocked up; the angel with the flaming sword guards it, Gal. iii. 10. O sirs! duties are a sandy foundation, and great will be the fall of legal professors.—Let us inquire,

IV. Why sinners labour in these things for satisfaction, and do not come to Christ?—They do so because,

1. They have lost God, the fountain of happiness, and therefore they seek to squeeze it out of the creatures: Eph. ii. 12, "Having

no hope, and without God in the world." For, says God, Jer. ii. 13, "They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters." The sun is gone down upon them, and therefore they light their candles, and compass themselves with their own sparks; for the empty soul must have something to feed on. The prodigal wanted bread, and therefore fed on husks. Doves' dung is precious, when there is no bread in Samaria.—Sinners labour in these things,

2. Because, by the power of a strong delusion, they still expect satisfaction from them; they are represented in a magnifying glass, as the forbidden fruit was to our first parents, Gen. iii. 5, 6. That delusion took with them, is conveyed to their posterity, and will never be cured till grace do it. Hence men, though they meet with a thousand disappointments in these things, yet still from new hopes they renew the attempt.—Sinners labour thus,

3. Because these things are most suitable to the corrupt nature: Rom. viii. 5, "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh." Fishes swim in the river, and care not for the most pleasant meadow; swine prefer the dunghill to a palace; because everything seeks its like. Lusts must be nourished with these; even the way of the law, though just and good in itself, is the way that agrees best with self: Rom. iii. 27, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith? Sinners are engaged in this labour,

4. Because they know no better. Christ is a hidden Christ to men in their natural estate; they see not his glory, fulness, and excellency; they say, as in Song v. 9, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" The fowl scrapes by the jewels, and takes up a corn beside them, because it knows not their worth: 1 Pet. ii. 7, Unto you, therefore, which believe, he is precious, but unto them which be disobedient, the stone the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them that stumble at the word, being disobedient." —Sinners continue this labour,

Lastly, Because men naturally are enemies to the way of salvation by Jesus Christ.—I now come,

V. To make some practical improvement of the whole.

Allow me, then, to expostulate with you in the most earnest manner upon this subject. Why spend you your labour for that which satisfieth not? Isa. lv. 2. Seeing you would labour, will you not change your work, and labour in God's way, that ye may enter into his rest? It is a wearisome labour that all out of Christ are engaged in. I would have you, then, to give it over, and engage in the service of Christ. I come in his name, to bid you, to beseech

you, to cease from this labour. I have these things to say, in regard to it.

1. It is a labour God never put in your hands, but it proceeds from the devil, and a corrupt heart, who yoked you to that work of seeking your happiness in the creatures; in lusts, or in the law, and not in God. To this some may plead, Not guilty! "We know (say such) the world is but a vain thing, and we place our chief happiness in God. God forbid we should be labouring in any such way!" For your conviction, however, I must speak a few things. You may be deceived; many are as busy as their hands can be at that work, and yet say that they are not: Prov. xxx, "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness."—I would inquire at you,

(1.) Who loosed you from this labour? Were you never at it? If you think so, you miserably deceive yourselves, Eph. ii. 3, already quoted. Since Adam went from God, to pluck his happiness off the forbidden tree, all mankind have followed his steps, and abide at the work, till converting grace loose them. What is conversion, but a turning to God, from whom we are naturally turned away? Alas! there are few converts!—I inquire,

(2.) Was you ever heartily wearied of this labour, seeing your folly in abiding so long with it? Was it ever a heavy task, that you was made to groan out under? All are welcome to Christ that will come, but none will ever give over their labour till they be brought to this. God must bring the soul to a holy despair in this way, ere it be given over, Hos. ii. 6, 7. And then the soul, having run itself out of breath, can neither get satisfaction in the creatures, nor go to God; thus it leaves the pursuit, and sits down with that, Jer. xxxi. 18, "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God." John vi. 44, "No man can come unto me, except the Father who sent me draw him."—I inquire,

(3.) How are you kept from returning to this labour? If you have left it, it will not be without a struggle. There is a natural bias in the hearts of all men this way. Alas! the strong man keeps the house with the greater part; they have no struggle with the world, neither how to get it, nor how to keep it out of the heart.—I inquire,

(4.) Whence is it your greatest dissatisfaction proceeds, from the world's misgiving with you, or God's hiding his face from you? from your disappointments in the world, or at the throne of grace? Where the disappointment goes deepest, the expectations

have been greatest: "Hope deferred makes the heart sick;" an infallible evidence that most men are at this work. Men will not be dissatisfied for missing a thing, where they were not to find it.—I inquire,

(5.) Where do you find your greatest satisfaction and pleasure, if we may call it so? In the enjoyment of God, or of the world, or in getting the cravings of your lusts answered? Ah! there are not a few, from whom, if the world's joy was turned away, that would not have a blythe hour. They never found as much sweetness in the benefits of the covenant, as in those of the world.

(6.) If you be not labouring thus, what are you doing then? There is not, and there cannot be, an idle soul among us. If the devil has us not, God has us at work; one of the two must. These things must bring convictions to our breasts.

Allow me still farther to expostulate with you. Why spend you your labour for that which satisfieth not? The labour you are engaged in is a thankless labour; God will not thank you for it; he says, "Who hath required this at your hands?" The devil pays you the wages which are due to it, which are death, Rom. vi. 23. He hath no better to give. Besides this, the labour in which you are engaged, is a labouring against God: Jer. ii. 13, "Having forsaken the fountain of living waters, ye have hewed out for yourselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." Ye are thus setting the creature in the room of God, and accordingly God is against you in this labour, so that you can never get what you are seeking from it. Oh! then be exhorted to cease from, to give up with this labour. To prevail with you in doing this, I would lay before you the following motives.

1. Why will ye toil so to bring out of the creatures what is not in them? Nothing but God himself is commensurable to the desires of the soul; no man ever saw or will see an end of his desires, till they are swallowed up in God himself. When the creatures were at their best, there was the forbidden tree in paradise to teach man his happiness was not in them. How much more now, when they are so much worse! Isa. xxviii. 20, "For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it, and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it."

2. How can ye think to find rest in that which is restless in itself? are not all things here unstable as water, and so cannot excel? Unchangeableness is a necessary property of that which makes truly happy, for otherwise the very fear of losing it mars the conceived happiness. Will we seek our rest in vanity, fill our hands with the wind, sit easy on the rolling waves, or on the top of a wheel that is in continual motion?

3. Did you ever meet with that among creature enjoyments, that was every way as ye would have had it? Dissatisfaction will proceed from any defect, however small, as it was with Haman, Esth. v. 13; but satisfaction requires an universal concurrence of all desirables in the thing that must satisfy; So it is, Song v. 16, "He is altogether lovely." Let a man turn over the whole creation for satisfaction, let all be cast into his lap, yet he will find, as in Job xx. 22, "In the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits." Who ever got the rose that wanted the prickles? the sweetness in any of them, that wanted a mixture of bitterness?

4. Do not the disappointment of hopes necessarily cleave to them all? They promise more when afar off, than they afford when they are come near. Mountains afar off become mole-hills when near; like a ball of snow, the more closely it is held, it will grow the less.

5. Has not the sap been squeezed out of enjoyments to thee between the hand and the mouth? Hos. ix. 2, "The floor and the wine-press shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail in her." Have you not had fair prospects that have been blasted in a moment, ere you ever tasted of them? As if they had appeared for no other end, but to raise the appetite that was not to be laid with them.

6. Has not the loss of them often brought greater sorrow than ever the having of them gave joy: while God has taken away the desire of thine eyes, thy choice comforts. Wert thou not more grieved then, than thou wert happy before?

7. Has not that wherein thou hast expected the greatest comfort turned out to be the greatest cross? This was the case with Rachel, who said to Jacob, "Give me children, else I die," Gen. xxxi. compare Gen. xxxv. 16—20. She got children, and death instantly followed.

8. Have not signal mercies, as well as judgments, brought a sting along with them, while conscience has been whispering unto thee, that God was thine enemy.

9. Was ever thy heart truly at rest in these things, so that thou couldst say thou desirest no more? Nay, but the more of these, the more are they desired.

10. There is another way to come at your purpose. Come to Christ, and he will give you rest. This is a short way, for all is in him; whatever perfections are scattered up and down amongst the creatures, all is in him, and infinitely more. It is a sure way, for you will not miss happiness if you come to him.

I would once more expostulate with you. Why do you spend

your labour for that which satisfieth not? I would beseech you, in the most earnest manner, not only to cease from, to give up with, your present unpleasant and unprofitable labour, but also to change your labour; I would have you, not only to depart from evil, but even to do good; I would call upon you to engage in the service of a new master, and run in the way of his commandments. You are labouring, you must be labouring, one way or other; will you not then engage in the labour of true religion, real godliness? If we must serve, surely it is better to serve Christ than the devil. The labour that there is in religion affrights the world at it; but why should it, seeing their labour is so great while out of Christ? Consider,

1. We are not calling you from idleness to working, but from labour to labour. And even if we were still to be slaves, better be so to God than to the devil. What will men say to Christ at the last day, who will be at pains in their lusts, but at none in holiness, that will bear a yoke, but not Christ's yoke?

2. We call you, not from one base labour to another, but from a base to an honourable work. Should one be called from the stone-barrow to be a king's cup-bearer, it were not comparable to what is proposed.—1. They will have a more honourable master.—2. More honourable fellow-labourers, for the angels serve him.—3. More honourable work, God himself is glorious in holiness.—4. A more honourable office; from being slaves to the devil, they are made kings and priests unto God.

3. We call upon you from vain labour, to that which shall be prosperous and successful; you are labouring for happiness there, where you will never get it, but here are full breasts; you are in vain striking at the flinty rock for water, here is an open fountain, where none ever went away disappointed.

4. We call you from a barren labour, where you will get nothing but sorrow to take away with you, to a labour which, when you have finished your works, will follow you, Rev. xiv. 13. Ah! miserable is your present labour, Isa. lix. 5, 6. The spider wastes its bowels to spin its web, and when all is done, one stroke of the besom sweeps all away; it is either killed in its web, or drawn by it as a rope unto death; so that it doth but spin its winding-sheet, or plait the rope for itself. Consider,

5. That the worst which can be made of it is, that religion is hard labour. But this should be no prejudice against it with you, seeing, as has been said, the labour out of Christ is also hard labour. But to cast the balance, observe,

(1.) If it is hard labour, it is worth the pains, the other is not so,

for, Prov. ii. 4, 5, "If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." There is hard labour in digging stones, as well as in digging for gold; nay, it is hard labour digging disappointments, that which is not; whereas the gain of the other is precious and certain.—1. The promise, Prov. viii. 21, "That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance, and I will fill their treasures."—2. The experience of all the labourers confirms the certainty of it: "I (God) said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain."

(2.) If it is hard labour, it is short; if the work be sore, yet it is not longsome. You shall soon rest from your labours: Rev. xiv. 13. He that is tired with his journey, his spirits will revive when near the end. The shadow of the evening makes the labourer work heartily, for loosing-time is at hand. The trials, afflictions, weeping, &c. of the saints, endure but for a moment. On the other hand, the labour of other persons knows no end; no rest abides them, but an everlasting toil under wrath that never ends.

6. We call you from a hard to an easy labour: "My yoke is easy;" Christ has said it, we must believe it. But to clear it, consider for this time, only these two things.

(1.) All the difficulties in religion arise from that active corruption which is in men, putting them to labour in their lusts and in the law: Matth. xi. 12, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Violence and force, not with God, he opposeth us not, but with our own corruptions. And in this sense only the scripture holds out the labour of religion to be hard. But men do not state the matter fairly. Lay a ton-weight upon a rolling stone, certainly it is harder to roll both together than the stone alone; but is the stone therefore lighter than the ton-weight? Take them separately, and absolutely, the labour in religion is easy, the other hard. Men cannot bear Christ's burden. Why? because they still keep on the devil's burden, and they cannot bear the one above the other; that is not fair. Lay off the one, take up the other; see which is lightest. A meek and a passionate man, which of them has the hardest task in bearing an affront? the sober man, or the drunkard? the worldly man, or he that lives above the world? The more power grace has, the more easy; the more power lusts have, the more hard is the labour.

(2.) There is true help in the one, not in the other.—The labour in religion has outward helps; the labourers are not helpless, they have a cloud of witnesses gone before them, whom they may see with their crowns upon their heads, Heb. xii. 1. Ye are not the

forlorn in hope. Armies of saints have stormed heaven before you and have left it behind them that the work is possible and the reward certain. The other have not this; if they get satisfaction in their lusts, they are the first. They see thousands before them, who have laboured as hard as they, disappointed, and are lain down in sorrow.—This labour has inward helps. Christ bears the heaviest part of his own yoke; he gives strength, he works the will for the work; and the work for us, when we have the will: Phil. ii. 13, "For it is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Isa. xxvi. 12, "Thou also hast wrought all our works in us." The others have not. True, they have that within them which puts them on to this labour, but the more of the one, the harder is the other, as the wearied beast is goaded by the spur, and worn out by their being beaten when no straw is allowed them. But where is the help to work satisfaction and happiness out of the creatures, or from the law?

7. We call you from a wearisome to a lightsome pleasant labour. I have proved the first; for the last, see Prov. iii. 17, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." But let us hear what can be said for both.

(1.) Is there much pleasure in sin? *Ans.* In some there is none. What pleasure has the passionate man, that kindles a fire in his own bosom? What pleasure has the envious, that gnaws himself like a serpent for the good that others enjoy? What pleasure has the discontented, that is his own executioner. Consider the calm of spirit that the contrary graces bring, and judge who has the better part.—As for those sins in which pleasure is found,

[1.] It is common to them with these creatures with whom they will not desire to be ranked. For these things that gratify men's sensual appetite are common to them with beasts, as gluttony, drunkenness, filthiness, &c. A sow can drink, and be as drunk as the greatest drunkard, and so on. And they have the better of them, as being under no law, and therefore they can go the full length of their appetite.—2. They do it without remorse.—3. They find satisfaction in these things, seeing they are not capable of desiring greater things. Now, put these together, where is the pleasure? Is it not surpassed by the pain? As to the desires of the mind, these are common to them with devils. The greatest swearer, liar, and proud opposer of religion, have the trade but from the second hand. The devil can satisfy his curiosity better than the most curious, reason more closely against religion than any atheist. Only obstinate despisers of reproof and mockers surpass the devil, for the devils believe and tremble: whereas for a time they do not.

(2.) The pleasure is but momentary, the pain follows hard at the heels, and is eternal. What pleasure can be devised, for which a man would hold his finger over a burning candle for a quarter of an hour? how much more dreadful to endure eternal burnings!

(3.) The struggle that conscience makes against corruption, brings more torment than that which corruption makes against grace. Conscience is more dreadfully armed than corruption; there is here as much difference as there is betwixt the hand of God and the hand of the devil. See now what becomes of the pleasure!

(2.) The labour in religion is truly pleasant. It is truly holy labour; for of that we speak, and scripture-testimony proves its pleasantness; see Prov. iii. 17, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Ask David, and he will tell you, in Psalm lxxxiv.; Paul, in 2 Cor. xii. 10.

(1.) It is a labour suited to the nature of the soul, the better part, their divine supernatural nature, 2 Pet. i. 4. Believers are partakers of a divine nature. This must needs create ease and delight; the stream easily flows from the fountain; birds with pleasure fly in the air. The reason of the difficulty in religion to many is, they are out of their element when engaged in it.

(2.) Therein the soul carries on a trade with heaven; entertains communion with God, through the Spirit of Christ, by a mutual intercourse of grace and duty, the soul receiving influences, and returning them again in duties: as the rain falls on the earth freely, so the waters run freely toward the sea again.

(3.) Great peace of conscience usually attends this; and the more labour, the more peace: Psal. cxix. 165, "Great peace have they who love thy law." Here is a feast which nothing but sin mars: 2 Cor. i. 12, "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." Men cannot take it from us, John xiv. 27.

(4.) Sometimes they have great manifestations of Christ, evidences of the Lord's love raising a high spring-tide of joy in their souls, greater than that which the whole congregation of the world enjoys, Psalm iv. 6, 7. It is joy unspeakable, and full of glory, 1 Pet. i. 8.

(5.) It is a lightsome way they walk in, whereas the other is darksome; the light of the Lord's word shines in it. The Mahommedans have a tradition, that Moses' law and Christ's gospel were written first with ink made of pure light. Sure the scripture points out duty, as if it were written with a sunbeam.

8. We call you from a labour against yourselves, to a labour for your advantage. We must either do the work of God or the devil.

Every sin is a new impediment in your way to heaven, a new stone laid on the wall of separation. What a mad thing is it to be working out our damnation, instead of our own salvation!

9. We call you not to more, but to other labour. We are all laborious creatures; the greatest idler is in some sort busy. Paul calls even them that work not at all, busy bodies, 2 Thes. iii. 11. Our life is nothing but a continual succession of actions, even as the fire is ever burning, and the rivers running. It is in some respect impossible to do more than we do; the watch runs as fast when wrong as when right. Why may we not then keep the highway while we are travelling.—Consider,

10. That the same pains that men are at to ruin themselves, might possibly serve to save them. There are difficulties in the way of sin as well as of religion. Does not sin oftentimes bereave men of their night's rest? Are they more disturbed when communing with their own souls, and with God? Do not men draw sin as with cart-ropes? Isa. v. 18. Why might not labour be employed in drawing the heart to God? If men would but change, and suck as greedily and incessantly at the breasts of God's consolations, as they do of the creatures, how happy would they be!

Lastly, Consider that the labour in religion is not greater, nay, it is less than in sin, for religion contracts our work to one thing: Luke x. 41, 42, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful." Sinners have many lusts to please, the saints have but one God to please; the work of religion is all of a piece, sin not so. There is a sweet harmony betwixt all the graces and all the duties of religion. But lusts are quite contrary, and as they war against grace, so against one another, James iv. 1, "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not from hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" So that the sinner is dragged by one lust one way, by another, another. And how hard is it to serve contrary masters!

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

SERMON XX.

MATTH. xi. 28,

Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

I now proceed to the consideration of

Doctrine II. That all who are out of Christ, are under an heavy burden, which, by all their labour, they cannot shake off.

In illustrating of which, I shall only,

I. Offer a few observations.

II. Make some practical improvement.

I. I am to offer a few observations; such as,

1. That Satan has a load on all out of Christ; it is a load of sin; Isa. i. 4, "Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity." This load is twofold:

1*st*, A load of guilt, Gen. iv. 13, "And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear," (Heb. "sin.") Guilt is the heaviest load ever was on the shoulders of men or angels. The scriptures hold it forth,

(1.) As debt. He that is in debt is under a burden. It is the worst of debts, we cannot pay it, nor escape the hands of our creditor; yea, we deny the debt, care not for count and reckoning, we wave our creditor as much as we can; so it stands uncancelled. But it is a debt that must be paid: 2 Thess. i. 9, "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." They shall pay what justice demands.—It is represented,

(2.) As a yoke tied fast on the sinner's neck; hence pardon is called a loosing of it, guilt being, as it were, cords of wrath, whereby the sinner is bound over to God's wrath. Pardon is also called remission or relaxation: Rom. iii. 25, "To declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."—It is pointed out,

(3.) As a burden: Hos. xiv. 2, "Take away all iniquity." Take away, namely, as a burden off a man's back. Hence Christ is said to have borne our sins, the burden of the elect's guilt being laid on his back. What a heavy load is it! (1.) It makes the whole creation groan, Rom. viii. 22. It caused them take their pains five thousand years since, and they are not yet delivered of their burden.

All the groans that ever men gave on earth and in hell were under this burden; it sunk the whole world into ruin: "Christ took our nature," to prevent us going down to the pit, Heb. ii. 16; (Greek, "caught hold"), as of a drowning man, not of the whole seed of Adam, for great part of it fell to the ground, but of the seed of Abraham, the elect. (2.) This load sunk the fallen angels, made them fall as stars from heaven to the bottomless pit. And what a load was it to Christ, that made him sweat as it were great drops of blood, that made him groan and die!—It is,

2dly, A load of servitude to lusts, which of themselves are heavy burdens; the very remainder of which made the apostle groan: Rom. vii. 24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" What greater burden can be, than for a man to have a swarm of unmortified corruptions hanging about him, whose cravings he is still obliged to answer. This is that which creates that weary labour, of which we have already spoken; better a man were burdened with serpents sticking in his flesh, than with these.—I observe,

2. The law has a load on the Christless sinner; and that,

(1.) A load of duties, as great and numerous as the commandment, which is exceeding broad, can lay on. Though they perform them not, yet they are bound upon them by the commandment: and they shall sooner dissolve the whole fabric of the world, than make void this commandment. This is a heavy load. True, they that are in Christ have a yoke of duties laid on them, but not by the law, but by Christ. The difference is great; the law exacts perfect obedience, but gives no strength; Christ, when claiming obedience to his law, gives strength for the performance, which makes it an easy obedience.—There is,

(2.) A load of curses: Gal. iii. 10, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them." Every commandment of the law is fenced with a curse, denounced against the breakers of it. How great must be the load, then, where every action is a sin, and every sin brings a curse! This is a heavy load, that makes the earth reel to and fro, like a drunkard, under the weight of it.—I observe,

3. That God has a load on the Christless sinner, that is, of wrath: Eph. ii. 3, "And were by nature children of wrath." This is an abiding load: John iii. 36, "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." This load is far heavier than mountains of brass; it is weightier than can be expressed.

II. I am now to make some practical improvement. From what has been said, I infer,

I. That every one must bear his own burden. There is no getting through the world with an even-up back. If people will not take up Christ's burden, they will bear a heavier one; if they will not be Christ's servants, they must be slaves to their lusts; if they will not take on the yoke of holiness, they shall bear a load of wrath; if people will still slip the yoke of Christ, God will wreathe the yoke of their transgressions about their neck, that they shall not get shaken off. We have given sorry entertainment to Christ's burden: it is too likely we may come to get one of another sort. The entertainment we have given to Christ's burden is like to wreathe a threefold yoke about our necks. For,

(1.) We have had little taste for the preaching of Christ, the great mysteries of the gospel. The preaching of sin and duty, as they call it, has been more desired than the preaching of the vitals of religion. I fear it be the plague of the generation, to get such preaching of sin and duty, as that the doctrine of Christ and free grace fall through between the two, and the gospel be turned into a system of morality with us.

(2.) We have little valued pure worship, it has been a burden to us, and we have ground to fear a burden of another sort, the trash of men's inventions in God's worship. There is an attempt already made to set up Dagon by the ark of God; and God knows where it may stop. If the ceremonies appointed by God himself were such, Acts xv. 10, "as neither our fathers nor we were able to bear, what must they be that are laid on by men?

(3.) God took the yoke of the enemy's oppression off our necks, for which we have been very unthankful. It is very like that God intends to lay it on again, that we may know the worth of our despised mercy: Hos. xi. 4, 5, "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love, and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them. He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return."—We may hence lament,

2. The case of the generation living without Christ, heavy laden, but not sensible of their burden, Isa. i. 4; compare ver. 3, both already quoted. Sin sits light upon people, they reign as kings without Christ; the law's authority does not draw them away to Christ; and though wrath lies heavy, they feel it not. Oh! what is the matter? They never feel the weight of it, nor once seriously put the question to themselves, What shall we do to be saved? They are taken up with so many things, that their soul's case cannot come into their minds. Again, they have a dead soul, and a stupid conscience, they complain not. Men's spiritual senses are

bound up, and a seared conscience, got by sinning over the belly of daily warnings, is the plague of the generation. Well, but when conscience is awakened, people will find their sores; when drops of wrath fall on the conscience, it will make a fearful hissing: Isa. xxxiii. 14, "The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites; who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"—I only exhort you,

3. To labour to be sensible of your burden, and to be concerned to get rid of it. Is there not a burden of sin upon your backs? mind that you have to do with it.—Consider, That heaven's gate is strait, and will not let in a man with a burden of unpardoned, unmortified sin on his back. The wide gate is that which only will afford room for such. Off it must be, or they will never see heaven.—Consider again, all that they can do will not shake it off, the bonds of iniquity are stronger than to be broken with their weak arms; all the moisture of their bodies, dissolved into tears, will not wash it off.—Consider, finally, it will never fall off of its own accord. Age coming on may wear off the violence of some lusts, but the guilt remains, and the root of sin. Death itself will not put it off, for it will lie down, and also rise with you, and cleave to you through eternity.

What shall we do then? What more proper than come to Christ? He, and he only, can ease you of your burden. This brings us forward to the invitation itself: "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden;" which we have expressed in

Doct. III. That whatever sinful and vain labours sinners are engaged in, whatever be the loads which are lying on them, they are welcome to Christ; he calls them to come to him, and in coming they shall obtain rest.—Or more shortly thus:—

The devil's drudges and burden-bearers, even the worst of them, are welcome to come to Christ, and shall find rest in him.—In opening which, I shall in general shew,

I. What is meant by coming to Christ.

II. I shall more particularly attempt to unfold the import of the invitation, in the several points deducible from the text.

III. I shall consider what is the rest which Christ promises, and will give to such as come to him.

IV. I shall make some practical improvement.

I. I shall show what in general is meant by coming to Christ. To come to Christ is to believe on him: John vi. 35, "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never

hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." Unbelief is the soul's departing, not from a living law, but from the living God, Heb. iii. 12. Christ is the Lord, God is in him, he calls sinners to come to him; faith answers the call, and so brings back the soul to God in Christ. Now, the scripture holds forth Christ many ways answering to this notion of coming to him by faith. And that you may see your privilege and call, I shall hold forth some of these to you.

1. The devil's drudges and burden-bearers are welcome to Christ, as the great gift of the Father to sinners, to come and take it: John iii. 16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life." The world was broken by Adam; God sends Christ as an up-making gift, and the worst of you are welcome to him, yea, he bodes (urges) himself upon you. Come to him, then, ye broken impoverished souls, that have nothing left you but poverty, wants, and debt.—Such are to come to him,

2. As the great Physician of souls: Matth. ix. 12, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Christ in the gospel comes into the world as to an hospital of sin-sick souls, ready to administer a cure to those that will come to him for it. Our diseases are many, all of them deadly, but he is willing and able to cure them all. He is lifted up on the pole of the gospel, and says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else," Isa. xlv. 22.—Such should come to him,

3. As the satisfying food of the soul: Isa. lv. 1—3, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." The soul is an empty thing, and has hungry and thirsty desires to be satisfied; the creatures cannot satisfy, Christ can: John vi. 35, "My flesh, (says he,) is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." God has made a feast of fat things in Christ, in him all the cravings of the soul may be satisfied; there are no angels to guard the tree of life; no seal on this fountain: Zech. xiii. 1, "In that day, there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." There is no inclo-

sure about this flower of glory, Cant. ii. 1. Here is the carcase,—where are the eagles that should gather together?—Such come to Christ,

4. As one on whom they may rest: Song viii. 5, "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?" We are not able to do our own turn, but on him we should rely; 2 Chron. xvi. 8. "Because thou didst rely on the Lord, he delivered thine enemies into thine hand." Guilt makes the mind in a fluctating condition. By coming to Jesus we are stayed, as is a ship at anchor. In, or from ourselves, we have nothing for justification and sanctification. God has laid help upon one that is mighty; the weary soul is welcome to rest in him.—Such come to him,

5. As one on whom they may cast their burdens: Psalm lv. 22, "Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." The soul is heavy laden, while out of Christ: Jesus holds out the everlasting arms, Deut. xxxiii. 27, faith settles down on them, casting the soul's burden upon them; "Come (says he) with all your misery, debts, beggary, and wants, I have shoulders to bear them all; I will take on the burden, ye shall get rest." He is content to marry the poor widow.—Such come to him,

6. As one in whom they may find refuge: Heb. vi. 18, "Who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before us." The law, as the avenger of blood, pursues the soul. Christ is that city of refuge, where none can have power against them. The gates are never shut; here is a refuge from the law, from justice, and from the revenging wrath of God. Here is shelter under the wings of Christ: how willing is he to gather his people, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings!—Such come to him,

7. As one in whom the soul may at length find rest: Psalm xxxvii. 7, "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him." The soul out of Christ is in a restless state, still shifting from one creature to another, not finding content in any. But by coming to Christ, the soul takes up its eternal rest in him, and he becomes a covering of the eyes to it. We are like men in a fever, still changing beds; like the dove out of the ark, we have no rest, till we come to Christ. Such come to Christ,

8. As a husband: Matth. xxii. 4, "All things are ready, come unto the marriage. Your Maker is content to be your husband, Psalm xlv. 10. Ministers are sent, as Abraham's servant, to seek a spouse for Christ. He is willing to match with the worst, the meanest of you; he seeks no dowry; he is the richest, the most honourable, the most tender and loving husband.—Such come to Christ.

Lastly, As a powerful deliverer. Christ stands at our prison

doors, as in Isa. lxi. 1, "proclaiming liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." All who come to him, as in 2 Cor. viii. 5, first give their ownselves unto the Lord. Whosoever will come to Jesus, must give up themselves to him. It is the work of faith, to give up the soul to Christ, that he may save it, that he may open the prison doors, take the prey from the mighty, and deliver the lawful captive.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

SERMON XXI.

MATTH. xi. 28,

Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

HAVING very briefly considered what it is to come to Christ, by pointing out under what characters we are to come to him, and the consequent improvement which this coming denotes, in order to explain the invitation here given more particularly, I go on, as was proposed,

II. To unfold its import, viewed in the several parts of which the text consists.

You will accordingly observe, that there is in the text, the characters invited,—the "labouring and heavy laden;" there is the invitation itself, "Come unto me;" by whom the invitation is given, by Christ; and the encouragement proposed to their complying with it, "I will give you rest."—All these considered complexly, in our view, import the following things.

1. That all men naturally are at a distance from God; if it were not so, they needed not be bid come. This is not a distance of place, but a relative distance, a distance of opposition, which lies in these three things.

(1.) The original union between God and man is blown up; they were united in a covenant of works, whereby they had common friends and enemies. This was the first marriage-covenant, but Adam broke it, and so broke off from God. Hence God drove him out of paradise, as a divorced woman out of the house of her husband, spoiled of all her ornaments.

(2.) The hearts of men are naturally turned from God, and are a mass of enmity against him: Rom. viii. 7, "Because the carnal mind

is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." There is a perfect contrariety betwixt the nature of God and ours. That first sin of Adam has been a little leaven, that hath quite soured the whole lump of mankind: so that we are not only away, but far off from the Lord: Eph. ii. 13, "Without God in the world."

(3.) The soul is still going farther and farther from God in the whole of our life, while in that state: Heb. iii. 12, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." Every sin is a step farther from God; therefore the gospel-call is after them that are running away, that they may return to the Lord. We are on the road leading to destruction, and moving very swiftly, as the water, the more it runs, the farther it is removed from the fountain-head whence it came.

From what has been now observed, we may learn the sinfulness and misery of our natural state. It is our duty and privilege to be near God; to be far from him must then be our sin and misery. No wonder, then, we be dead, that we can do no good while in this state of separation from God. God also is departed from us, Jer. vi. 7. Will not this end in eternal separation, if we return not?—The invitation imports,

2. That if you have a mind to meet and unite with God again, you must meet with him in Christ, and unite with God in him. "All things (says Jesus) are delivered unto me of my Father. Come therefore unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Would you have peace, pardon, and every blessing? you must come to him for it. God has condescended so far to forward the meeting, that he has come down, and dwelt in the flesh of Christ, there to wait sinners, to promote their meeting with him: 2 Cor. v. 19, "God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." He needed not to have come so far, but of his own free grace he has done it; but he will never come farther. There, then, and only there, sinners may meet him; God is in him, and is there to make up the peace through him; and if you will not come to him, and meet God there, you shall never see his face in peace.—Here it may be proper to shew, that this is God's contrivance for re-uniting with sinners that are by sin far from him; and that there is no other way. This appears,

(1.) From plain scripture-testimony: John xiv. 6, "I (said Jesus) am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father, but by me." He is the great Secretary of heaven, by whom alone you can be brought into the King's presence: Eph. ii. 18, "For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." The keys of the house of David hang at his girdle.

(2.) If there were any other way of coming to God again, it behoved to be one of these two: either, 1*st*, By satisfying the law according to the first covenant; but that is impossible for us, seeing we cannot give perfect obedience, nor satisfy justice for the sins we are guilty of, Gal. iii. 10, often quoted: Or, 2*dly*, in a way of mere mercy, for mercy's sake. But this cannot be: for,—The justice of God necessarily requires satisfaction, and God will not dispense his mercy in prejudice of his justice: Psalm v. 5, "The foolish shall not stand in thy sight, and thou hatest all the workers of iniquity." One part of the character of God is, that "he will by no means clear the guilty," namely, without satisfaction. The law is already made, fenced with threatenings of eternal wrath, and it is broken; God's justice and truth are both, in consequence, engaged to see the threatening accomplished.—Again, God's last will and testament is already made, and sealed by the death of his Son, but there is no such way proposed in it; no mercy but in Christ; yea, God has declared they shall have no mercy that come not to Christ: Matth. xvi. 16, "He that believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."—Moreover, the very providing of this way makes it evident that there is no other. Were there another way of bringing sinners to God, would not an infinitely wise God, and a loving Father, have fetched a compass, and dispensed with the blood of his own Son? If any could have been spared, it might have been expected that He would; but, Rom. viii. 32, "God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to the death for us all."—Finally, ever since Adam was driven out of paradise, this has been held forth as the only way, as in the first promise. Abel's acceptance was by it, Heb. xi. 4. Jesus is the only propitiatory, where God speaks in mercy to sinners.

Here I might also shew, what a suitable contrivance this is, for the purpose of uniting God and sinners.—It is most suitable: For,

1. It is suited to God's honour, the glory of his divine perfections: Heb. ii. 10, "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many souls unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." God, with the safety of his honour, may be reconciled to the worst of sinners in Christ; yea, the glory of all his perfections shines forth most illustriously in the mystery of Christ; there would be no safety in this plan, if it were not so.

2. It is suited to the comfort of the sinner, the contrivance being such, that it answers all the necessities of the sinner: Rev. iii. 18, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that

the shame of thy nakedness do not appear, and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." So that the soul may confidently come to God by Christ, who can do such things for it.

Let us more particularly consider this contrivance of the sinner's coming to, and uniting with God, by coming to Christ.—With this view, we observe,

1. That Christ is a substantial Mediator, partaking of both natures. He is the Father's fellow, yet bone of our bone. The worst of men are sibber* to heaven than the fallen angels; for "Jesus took not upon him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham." Here is the true ladder, the foot of which, his humanity, is set on earth, the top of which, his divinity, reaching to heaven, Gen. xxviii. above which the Lord stands making the covenant. If it consisted with the honour of God, for the divine nature to take into personal union with itself the human nature, it is equally consistent to take men into mystical union with the divine person of our Immanuel, upon this foundation. And when sinners see the first, they are encouraged to look for the second in Christ.

1. In Christ justice is satisfied: He said, "It is finished." In him God has presented to him a sacrifice to offended justice, a satisfaction to his law. God exacted, and he answered, till the utmost farthing was paid: Gal. iii. 13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us;" and he got up the discharge. The sinner has in him a defence against justice, an everlasting righteousness, in which God may behold the sinner, and be well pleased with him, and the sinner may see God, and yet live. Mercy has a free vent in him, and pardons run freely through his blood. We observe,

3. That the covenant is made with him in his blood; and all the promises of the covenant, all the benefits of it, sinners have at the second hand, Gal. iii. 16. God has laid up all in him: 2 Cor. i. 20, "For all the promises of God in him, are yea, and in him amen, to the glory of God by us." Sinners are to come to him for saving blessings, and to take them from him as the purchase of his blood: John v. 22. Our righteousness, pardon, peace, are all in him, "who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," 1 Cor. i. 30. Grace is in him, "for of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace," John i. 16. Glory is from him: "The Lord will give grace and glory."

4. By this means, the grace of God is exalted. It is to the praise of the glory of his grace. This is necessary for the glory of God in the second covenant, and for the sinner's comfort, which could not be promoted nor secured except in this way.

* More nearly related.

5. Here the matter is made sure; God is sure of the sinner, and the sinner sure of his union with God: such as are built upon this foundation, made members of him, Jesus will lose none of them. From what has been stated, I would infer,

(1.) That all who come to Christ shall come back to the state of union and communion with God, through him who knits heaven and earth, rent asunder by Adam's sin. Let your sins be never so great, these shall not stop it, for the cry of his blood is louder in God's ears, than that of our sins.—Infer,

(2.) That they that never come to Christ, shall never see God in mercy. Meet they may, but it will be a sad meeting, a meeting as of a malefactor with an inexorable judge, dry stubble with consuming fire, where our leaf will be as rottenness, and the blossoms of Christless duties go up as dust.

Thus you see there is but one door to God; but what if it be shut? No; it is open. For the invitation imports,

3. That sinners are welcome to come to Christ, that they may unite with God by him; Christ is ready to receive you on your coming.—As to this, consider,

(1.) Christ has made a long journey to meet with sinners. What brought him out of the Father's bosom into the world, but to bring sinners to himself, and so back to God again? What was the errand of the great Shepherd, but to seek them, even them that were straying on the mountains of vanity? Luke xix, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."—Consider,

(2.) How dear it cost him to purchase your union with God by him, 2 Cor. v. 21, "For he hath made him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Though ye should little value his blood, he will not undervalue it himself; for sinners it was shed, and will he not welcome the reward of it, the fruit of the travail of his soul? Why were his arms stretched on a cross, and his side pierced through, but that he might open up our way to God?—Consider,

(3.) How near lost sinners lay to Christ's heart, that he would refuse no hardship, in order that he might see the travail of his soul. His love was ancient love; from eternity, "his delights were with the sons of men," Prov. viii. 31; see his choice, Heb. xii. 2; and therefore, when he was to suffer, his heart was upon the work: Luke xii. 50, "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?" Jacob's love to Rachel shewed itself by his long service for her, which seemed to him but a few days.—Consider,

(4.) Why has he set up a ministry in the world, but to bring sin-

ners to himself? Matth. xxii. 3, "And he sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding." He would not have left ambassadors to treat with sinners in his name, if he were not willing to receive them, nay, were he not anxious that they should come to him.—Consider,

(5.) He heartily invites you to come to him; as in the text; in Isa. lv. 1, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price;" and in Rev. iii. 2, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." These invitations look not like one who cares not whether sinners come or not, far less like one who is not willing to receive them. Consider,

(6.) The earnestness of the invitations; he deals with sinners as one that will not take a nay-say: Luke xiv. 23, "Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." He not only knocks, but stands and knocks: strives with sinners by his word, his providences, and the motions of his Spirit; answers their objections, Isa. lv. 1, and downwards; while none can refuse, but those that rush wilfully on in their ruin; as in Ezek. xxxiii. 11, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye, from your wicked ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Consider,

(7.) How he complains of these that will not come: John v. 40, "And ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." "He speaks as one that has been working in vain: Isa. xlix. 4, "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain." He complains of Jerusalem, Matth. xxiii. 37; yea, he weeps over obstinate incorrigible sinners; Luke xix. 41, 42, "And when he came near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, if thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes." Sure he has lost no bowels of compassion by going to heaven; they flow out as freely and tenderly as ever.—Consider,

(8.) He commands sinners to come to him. The invitations are all commands; they are most peremptory: 1 John iii. 23, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son, Jesus Christ." If you do it not, you can do nothing that will please him: John vi. 29, "Jesus answered and said unto them, this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." And he leaves it on us with the most dreadful certification: Mark xvi. 16, "He that believeth not shall be damned." And hence it follows,

that the hearers of the gospel who perish, are inexcusable; the door was open, but they would not enter in.—The invitation imports,

4. That the worst of sinners are welcome to Christ: however great their burden of sin and misery be, it is no hinderance in their way to come to Christ. Where all are invited, none are excluded. But upon this I do not enlarge here, having insisted upon it at some length, when discoursing upon Joel iii. 10. All that I shall just now observe is, that this consideration shall shame you out of your slighting of Christ, and strike at the root of that bitter despair which lodges in the breasts of many, who are yet far enough from absolute despair of their case.—The invitation imports,

5. That Christ allows sinners to come to him, rather on account of the desperateness of their case, than otherwise: "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden." As if he had said, "Ye have been labouring, and yet can get no rest; let that engage you to come to me. Sit down and consider your case, if nothing else will prevail with you, let the desperateness of your disease bring you to the great Physician." You are cordially welcome to do so. For, consider,

(1.) That it is for this very end God discovers the worst of a man's case to himself, drives them to their wit's end, in order that he may begin to be wise: Hos. ii. 6, "Therefore, behold I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths." Ver. 7, "Then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now."—Consider,

(2.) That Christ has made offers of himself to those in the worst of cases: Isa. i. 18, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." And he holds out himself as a Saviour in particular for these, Rev. iii. 17, 18; Isa. lv. 7.—Consider,

(3.) Such have been made welcome, who have employed such arguments with him: Psalm xxv. 11, "For thy name's sake, pardon mine iniquity, for it is very great;" and so also in the case of the Canaanitish woman with Jesus, Matth. xv. 26,—28. Consider,

(4.) He has the more glory, the more desperate that the case is; none see the stars so well as from the bottom of a deep pit. His power is the greater to pardon, his grace to overcome, when there is most occasion for these being displayed; it is the worst of diseases, that do best proclaim the Physician's skill, when a cure is effected.

From what has been just now observed, we may see and admire the divine condescension, that Christ is so willing to take the sinner

in, when he sees himself cast out at all doors, can get rest nowhere else; that he will give him rest, and embrace the sinner, when he sees he can do no better, when he can make no other shift.—Hence also learn, how to make an excellent use of the badness of your case, even to take up these stumbling-blocks, and break up heaven's door with them; to make a virtue of necessity, and the more that the burden presseth, the more readily to go to Christ with it. True, it is never right coming to Christ, which sense of misery alone produceth; but love may thus crown a work which terror begins, and which when from the Holy Spirit it leads to. In a word, you are absolutely inexcusable, that come not to Christ, be your case what it will.

I now go on to what was proposed,

IV. Which was, to explain the nature of that rest which Christ graciously promises, and which he actually gives to such labouring and heavy-laden sinners, as truly come to him. And here it must be observed, that there is a rest which they may have in Christ; a rest here, and a rest hereafter. In this life there is a fourfold rest to be had in Christ.—A rest,

1. In respect of sin. The rest Christ gives from sin is twofold.

(1.) A rest from the guilt of sin. Guilt is a poison, infecting the conscience, which makes it so to smart that it can get no rest, as in the case of Cain and Judas, and also with those, Acts ii. 37, "They were pricked in their hearts." This, when it festers and becomes immoveable, is the gnawing worm in hell. Christ gives rest from it, Heb. ix. 4; his blood purges the conscience from dead works. The conscience, when like the raging sea, is stilled by him: Isa. lvii. 18, 19, "I have seen his ways, and will heal him; I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips: Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him." The soul finds this rest in the wounds of Christ, for, "by his stripes we are healed," Isa. liii. 5. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's own Son, cleanses from all sin. The soul diped in this fountain is washed from this poison, and is delivered from this sting of guilt.—There is rest,

(2.) From the reigning power of sin: Rom. vi. 14, "For sin shall not have dominion over you." Sin on the throne makes a confused restless soul, like the raging sea, continually casting out mire and dirt. Christ, by his Spirit's efficacy, turns sin off the throne, and restores rest to the soul. He casts down these Egyptian taskmasters, and thus the soul enters into his rest: Heb. iv. 10, "For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his." In the day of the soul's coming to Christ, he

acts like a King, setting all in order in the kingdom, that was a mere heap of confusion before his accession to the throne.—There is in Christ,

2. Rest from the law; not that he makes them lawless, but that he takes off them the insupportable yoke of the law, and gives them ease.—He does so,

(1.) From the burden of law-duties, which are exacted in all perfection, under the pain of the curse, while no strength is furnished wherewith to fulfil them: Rom vii. 4, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ." This is the yoke on all men's necks naturally; Christ put his neck in this yoke, and bare it, satisfying the law's demands completely, and so frees all that come to him from this service. Christ carries his people without the dominions of the law.—He does so,

(2.) From the curse of the law: Gal. iii. 13. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us." Rom. viii. 1. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." These that are come to him, he takes from off them that curse which they are under, and gives them his blessing, which he hath merited; carries them from Mount Sinai to Mount Zion, where they hear the blood of Jesus speaking peace, silencing the demand of vengeance, and affording a refuge for the oppressed.—There is in Christ,

3. Rest from that weary labour in which persons are engaged when in quest of happiness, leading the souls to the enjoyment of God: Psalm cxvi. 7, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul! for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." The soul, restless in seeking happiness among the creatures, he leads to God, the fountain of all perfection, opening their eyes, as he did Hagar's, to see the well, and bringing them into the enjoyment of all good in him, uniting the soul with himself; where,

(1.) The soul finds a rest of satisfaction from Christ, which it can find in no other quarter whatever, for the soul finds a rest of satisfaction from him, when by faith it is set on the breasts of his consolations. In these there is an object adequate to all the desires of the soul answering all its needs; thus, Prov. xiv. 14, "A good man shall be satisfied from himself." There is the triumph of faith in the enjoyment of God: Phil. iv. 18. "But I have all and abound."—The soul finds,

(2.) A rest in him of settled abode, insomuch, that the soul goes not abroad as it was wont, among the creatures for satisfaction; John iv. 14, "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall

be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life." Christ becomes precious to the soul. Like the released lady, that did not so much as look on or take notice of Cyrus, notwithstanding of the noble part he acted, but on him (her husband) who said, he would redeem her with his own life. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a field, the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof, goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."—There is in Christ,

4. Rest in respect of troubles. Christ gives rest,

(1.) From troubles in the world, now and then, when he sees meet: Psalm xxxiv. 19, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth them out of them all." Zion's God reigneth, be on the throne who will; and when he speaks peace, neither devils nor men can create his people trouble; for, Lam. iii. 37, "Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not? There is no such security from trouble as the godly have, but that is from heaven, and not from earth. Therefore,

(2.) Christ gives rest in trouble: John xvi. 33, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." You may, nay, you shall, meet with troubles, but he can make you get sweet rest in your souls; even when you are on a bed of thorns as to the outward man, he can give his people a sweet rest even in troubles. How can these things be? may some say.—In answer,

[1.] Christ gives his people in trouble an inward rest, that is an inward tranquillity of mind in midst of trouble: Psalm iii. 1—5, "Lord! how are they increased that trouble me? many are they that rise against me. Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah. But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah. I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for the Lord sustained me." Christ can make the believer as a vessel of water tossed here and there, yet not jumbled. There was a greater calm with the three children in the furnace, than with the king in the palace, Dan. iii. 24. Fear may be on every side when there is none in the centre, because Christ makes a blessed calm in their hearts.—Christ gives in trouble,

[2.] A rest of contentment: "I have learned, (says Paul, Phil. iv. 11,) in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." This is not only the duty, but the privilege of believers. If the lot of the godly be not brought up to their spirit, Christ will bring their spirit

down to their lot; and there must needs be rest there, where the spirit of the man and his lot meet in one: Psalm xxxvii. 19, "They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied."—Then follows,

[3.] A rest of satisfaction in the enjoyment of better things. What though the world hath a bitter taste in their mouths? Christ can hold a cup of consolation to them in that very instant, the sweetness of which will master the bitterness of the other: "Your sorrow (says he, John xvi. 20,) shall be turned into joy." "Our rejoicing (says Paul, 2 Cor. i. 12,) is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." They are not indeed stocks, to be unmoved with troubles, but their sorrow is so drowned in spiritual joy, that it is "but as sorrow," 2 Cor. vi. 10, "As sorrowful yet always rejoicing;" even as the joy of the wicked is "but as joy." Troubles may raise a mutiny of lusts within, but the peace of God quells them: "It keeps their hearts and minds through Jesus Christ,"—Christ gives,

(4.) A rest in confidence of a blessed issue: 2 Tim. i. 12, "For the which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless, I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." The soul in Christ has the promise to rest on; and however dark a side the cloud may have, faith will see through it; though they may sink deep, they will never drown, who have a promise to bear them up.—Thus, you see, they rest in Christ in trouble; and this rest is a most secure rest, where people may rest confidently: Isa. xxvi. 3, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." The wicked may have rest, but not with God's good will; therefore the more rest, the more dangerous is their case: 1 Thess. v. 3, "For when they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as a woman in travail, and they shall not escape." But there is perfect security in Christ, and that in the worst of times, Song iii. 7, 8. Again, it is a rest that is so rooted, that the soul can never be deprived of it: Isa. xxxii. 17, "And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever." How soon is the rest of the wicked broken, their candle put out! But this, although it may meet with some disturbance by temptations, as the clouds may go over the sun, yet it shall be as sure as the sun fixed in the firmament; it will be proof against the disturbances of the world, against the temptations and accusations of the devil; yea, against the demands of justice, and the threatenings

of the law. Then in the life to come, he will give them all complete rest who come to him: Heb. iv. 9, "There remaineth, therefore, a rest for the people of God." He will give their bodies rest in the grave, Isa. lvii. 2, and both soul and body rest in heaven hereafter; and that is a rest beyond expression.

If it should be inquired, Who is it that gives this rest? this is answered in our text; Christ says to such labouring and heavy-laden sinners, and he is able to make good his word, "I will give you rest." The gift of this rest is his prerogative; they that obtain it must get it out of his hands.—For illustrating and confirming this, consider,

1. That all creatures cannot give rest to a restless soul. Not any thing in them, or the whole of what can be afforded from them, can give it: Eccl. i. 2, "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity." Men, the best of men, cannot do it. Ministers may be directed to speak a word in season, but the Lord himself can only make that word effectual, 2 Sam. xii. 13, compared with Psalm li. Nay, angels cannot do it, Exod. xxxiii. 2, compare ver. 15. It requires a creating power: Isa. lvii. 18, "I have seen his ways, and I will heal him."—Consider,

2. There can be no rest to the soul without returning to a reconciled God, for it is impossible the soul can find true rest elsewhere; and there is no returning to God but by Christ: John xiv. 6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." He is the only ladder by which the soul can ascend to heaven.

3. Christ is the great Lord Treasurer of heaven. The fulness of power is lodged in him: Matth. xxviii. 18, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." There is nothing that any can get from heaven in the way of spiritual favour, but what comes through his hands: John v. 22, "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." Jesus also hath the keys of hell and death, Rev. i. 18.

4. He is the store-house, where the treasure is laid up, and out of which all needful supplies come: John i. 16, "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."—Consider,

5. The glorious types illustrating this: Joseph, Gen. xli. 40—44; Joshua, that brought the people to the rest in Canaan.—Consider,

6. That high character which he sustains: Heb. xii. 2. He is the "author and finisher of our faith."—Consider,

Lastly, It is reasonable it should be so, he hath purchased this rest with his blood: and therefore there is an high propriety that he should be the giver, the dispenser of this glorious blessing.—In the

IV. And *last* place, it was proposed to make some practical improvement of the whole. To enlarge here, however, would be improper, as a practical improvement has been made of the several parts of the subject all along, as they have been considered. At the same time, your attention may be called to the following brief hints. From what has been observed, you have had set before you,

1. A melancholy picture of the miserable state of all mankind by nature;—they are "labouring and heavy laden," they have various burdens lying on them, the burden of sin, the burden of the law, a burden often of fears, of terrors, arising from the former; and while thus heavy laden, they are labouring, striving to ease themselves of their burdens, struggling hard to get rid of them, while after all they are only labouring in vain in the fire, wearying themselves in the greatness of their way; are spending their "money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not," instead of obtaining the least ease or quiet. Their situation is in this way rendered more and more grievous and distressing, their burdens become heavier than they can bear, and their labour is rendered quite intolerable.

2. We may learn a special ingredient in the misery of those that thus labour, and are heavy laden. They are under the law as a covenant of works, which requires the full tale of brick, without affording the least straw with which to make them. They are under most grievous taskmasters, who are constantly saying, Give, give, while they are unable to work; and, what is still worse, they are without Christ, without God, and so without hope in the world. It is Jesus only that can help them; while afar from him, and enemies to him, they have no other prospect than that of perishing eternally. —But,

3. There is hence opened up a door of hope, even for such as are labouring and heavy laden, whatever their characters or conditions have been, or at present may be, though they may have long laboured in vain, and spent their strength for nought. However heavy, numerous, and continued these burdens may be, though in their view their condition may not only be distressing and deplorable, but even almost desperate, there is here a door of hope opened up to such. On Jesus is their help laid; in and from him it is to be found. He is saying, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth; for I am God, and besides me there is no Saviour." "Hearken ye stout-hearted, and ye that are far from righteousness." Nay, he speaks to such expressly by name; without excluding a single individual, whatever his present character or condition be, his gracious words are, "Come unto me, all ye" the whole of you, and each of you

"that labour, and are heavy laden, and," in coming to me without peradventure, "you shall have rest."

In the *last* place, there is pointed out to us what is the indispensable duty of all the hearers of the gospel. It is to come to Jesus; to comply with the gracious call and invitation here given. It is true, this in the text is addressed only to the labouring and heavy laden; but is not this a character common to all the hearers of the gospel? Are not all more or less in this situation? A situation so far from being desirable, that it is exceedingly uncomfortable. If such, then, would consult their present or eternal welfare; if they would hearken to the gracious call, the kind invitation which Christ gives them; if they would obey heaven's great command, it must be admitted, that it is their bounden duty to come to Jesus, that is, to believe on him; for it is only in the exercise of faith as coming to him, and according as faith is in exercise, that any can be freed from their heavy burdens, or be released from that vain and irksome labour in which they are engaged.

Let all such, then, be exhorted to cease from the labour which satisfieth not; from these fruitless attempts which they are engaged in to rid themselves from these heavy burdens that they are weighed down under. Be exhorted to come to Jesus, cast all your burdens and your cares over upon him. He is able and willing to sustain both you and your burdens, whatever they are. Come to him, then, as you are, as labouring and heavy laden. There is the most cordial welcome afforded to all such; the greater your burdens, and the more pressing your necessities are, in the way of putting your case unreservedly in his hand, and under his management, you may in due time assuredly expect a comfortable issue. He hates putting away. Whosoever will may come, and him that cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out. "Come unto me" says he, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

CHRIST, A REFRESHFUL SHADOW IN A WEARY LAND.*

SERMON XXII.

Isa. xxxii. 2,

And a man shall be—as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

This prophecy relates to Hezekiah, to his happy and pious government; but doubtless a greater than Hezekiah is here, and that is Jesus Christ, the king of saints. This world, before sin entered into it, had always a clear sky; there was not an air of pestilential wind to blow upon them that were travelling through it to Immanuel's land. But since sin entered, the case is quite altered; strong winds of trouble blow, tempests of heavy rain fall; there are inundations in the world, as the word is; it is a dry place; in respect of comfort, it is a weary land; but though a weary land, it is not altogether without some comforting prospect. A shadow and shelter is prepared for the weary traveller; for it is promised in the text, "And a man shall be—as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." In which words, there is observable,

1. What the world is spiritually to Christ's subjects, the people of God, a "weary land;" that is, a thirsty land, a scorching country, a stormy place, with many inconveniences, which make travellers weary and faint. It is a wilderness, wherein there is no water, but a vehement heat, which makes people weary, and long for shelter and refreshment.—Observe,

2. What Christ is to them there, "as the shadow of a great rock." How pleasant is a shelter in such a place to the weary traveller! Such is Christ to his people in the world. There are many shelters, there is even the shadow of created comforts; but, alas! they are unsubstantial shades; they are as the shade of a tree, through which the sun, wind, or rain beats. But Christ is as the shadow of a rock, which none of these can pierce; and as a great rock, which gives a large shelter; so that there they have a perfect repose, blow what weather will.—The text affords us this

Doctrine, That Christ is a suitable shade, and a refreshing shelter, for those to whom the world is a weary land.

For illustrating this doctrine, it is proposed,

I. To show what is implied in the text.

II. To inquire in what respects the world is a weary land to the saints.

* This and the following discourse, delivered August, 1715.

III. To point out in what respects Jesus Christ is a suitable and refreshful shade and shelter to them in a weary land.

IV. Conclude with a practical improvement.

We are, then,

I. To shew what is implied in the text,—It imports,

1. That the world is not our dwelling-place, but the place through which we are travelling. This world is but a thoroughfare to another, where we come in at our birth, walk through in our life, and go out again at death. Many imagine but two fixed points in the universe, the higher and the lower, and that bodies are revolving in continual motion towards one or other of these, heaven and hell. The godly are going out of the world in affection, Song iv. 8; the wicked, in action, though not in affection; none are abiding.—It imports,

2. That there is no correcting of the ill air of the world; a shade and shelter may be had in it, but to reduce it to its first temperature, that it may indeed be a pleasant land, is not promised, and therefore cannot be expected. The winds of trouble must blow in it while there are such treasures of sin in it to bring them forth. While our provocations against heaven gather into clouds, there will be tempestuous rains of calamities in it. The godly may lay their account with this: John xvi. 33, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." And the carnal world need not lay their account by it: Job. v. 7, "Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upwards."—It imports,

3. That, foul or fair weather, we must set out our heads, and through the weary land we must go; there is no other way but to take our share of what may be going on in it. He that would stop till the sky clear, may with as good reason sit down and wait till the water run out, that he may get through the river dry shod; the last may be sooner expected than the first.—It imports,

4. That the travelling through it will try our strength; take what way we will, we cannot miss sometimes to be entangled in the wilderness, and to be wearied in it, though the heart were so glued to it, as never to be wearied of it. The winds, the rains, and the storms, that blow there, will bear heavy on us, so as that we will need a resting, a refreshing place.—It imports,

5. That nothing less than the great rock will be a sufficient shelter in this weary land; no solid peace or repose out of Christ, more than there was out of the ark when the deluge came on. The winds and storms will blow down, or blow through, all other shades which men make to themselves in the weary land: Isa. xxviii. 17, "And the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall

overflow the hiding-place." Flying from one mischief, while they flee not to the great rock, they shall fall into another: Amos v. 19, "As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him."—It imports,

6. That Christ is a sufficient shelter, however weary a land the world be: John xvi. 33, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Be the storms or heats as great as they will, he is as a great rock; and from him, though the troubles may be great, yet they may expect a great salvation. They will always be safe who are under the shade of the great rock, through which neither heats nor storms can pierce: Psalm xciii. 4, "The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters; yea, than the mighty waves of the sea." It is impossible they can be greater than they have been; nay, they can never be so great as once they were, when from heaven, earth, and hell, at once they blew upon Christ. Yet he bore them, bore up under them, bore them off his people; even as the heats and rains fall on the rock, while those under its shade are kept safe.—It imports,

Lastly, That the weary world makes Christ more precious to sinners than otherwise he would be. If the traveller were not scorched with heat, or tossed with tempests, he would never look near the rock. Ease in the world, is the neck-break of many. But it is well for the church and people of God, that the world is a step-dame to them; were they better entertained in the world's house, they would more seldom knock at God's door.—We now proceed,

II. To shew in what respects the world to the people of God is a weary land.—It is so, because,

1. The wind blowing in the traveller's face makes any land a weary land to him; and in this world, there is a wind of ordinary trouble, that is seldom if ever down, but blowing especially in the face of the travellers to Zion; Matth. vi. 34, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Sometimes it blows away the man's ease, blasts his reputation, blows away his worldly goods, his health, his relations, &c. It blows so that he is sure of nothing he has, unless it be Christ in him, the hope of glory. And the travellers must lay their account with this. This cannot fail but make the world a weary land. But the soul may find a calm under Christ's shadow, as Hannah did, when she poured out her soul before the Lord, 1 Sam. i. 16. Praying in faith is a great ease to a heart uneasy under trouble: Matth. vii. 7, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Christ is

an anchor that can keep the soul sure and steadfast amidst all the tempests of a weary world. He has an open ear to their just complaints, and a soft hand, under which the uneasy heart and head may repose themselves.—It is a weary land,

2. Because sometimes there are terrible tempests of common calamity, threatening to sweep all away before them, blowing in this world, which makes it a weary land. There are no tempests in the upper region, but in the lower region, where we are, they are very frequent, whereby nations, churches, and families, are thrown into the utmost confusion. David speaks of such, Psalm lv. 8, "I would," says he, "hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest." These often make a most miserable face on the places where they blow, and make the land a weary land indeed. But even in this case, there is found peace under Christ's shadow: John xvi. 33, "These things I have spoken unto you, that ye might have peace; in the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." In him believers have a peace the world cannot rob them of. He has hiding-places for his people, where he will hide them, if not from trouble, yet from the evil, the sting, and hurt of it: 1 Pet. iii. 13, "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" He will hide them, if not under heaven, yet in heaven; and they have no reason to complain who get there, though in a fiery chariot. Our Lord holds the winds in his hand, and they can blow no more terribly than he permits them; so that in the worst of times it is good news; Isa. lii. 7, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" And these that make Christ their friend, may bid defiance to all their enemies.—The world is a weary land,

3. Because the wild beasts in it make it a weary land. The scripture calls wicked men so, especially in their opposition to, and treatment of the people of God, and the world is the place of their abode: Song iv. 8, "Come with me, my spouse, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards." And therefore, while they are travelling through the wilderness, they are often put to that prayer, Psalm lxxiv. 19, 20, "O deliver not the soul of thy turtle-dove unto the multitude of the wicked, forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever, have respect unto the covenant, for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." No wonder the world be a weary land to the people of God; for the wild beasts are often heard roaring there; Psalm lxxiv. 4, "Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregation, they set up their ensigns

for signs;" threatening to devour, and to swallow up, and to make the name of Israel no more to be remembered; as the Egyptian beast did, Exod. xv. 9. But while these roarings make the hearts of God's people to tremble, the voice of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, terrible to his enemies, is comfortable to his friends: Psalm xciii. 4, "The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea." This moderated the roarings of the Assyrian in Hezekiah's days, Isa. xxxvii. 22. These beasts are often heard yelling in the world: Jer. ii. 15, "The young lions roared upon him, and yelled, and they made his land waste." Dreadful is that yelling they make when they are got together, uttering their blasphemies, curses, and reproaches, against God, his people, and his cause in the world, as if hell was opened, which is the den of the great lion. This makes the world a weary land, and it is most heavy and distressing to the people of God: Psalm lxxiv. 10, "O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?" But there is refreshment and shelter under Christ's shadow in this case, while the soul sees that he will close up at length the blasphemous mouths, and bring them to the city above, where they shall hear no more of any such thing. But again, these beasts are often seen tearing and devouring in the world the men that are more righteous than they: Hab. i. 13, "Wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?" God has his times wherein he lets them loose, to make havoc of the church, and shed the blood of his saints. But under Christ's shadow there is refreshing in this case. He can break out the teeth of the great lions with a touch; and while they are at the worst, he says to his people, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul," Matth. x. 28. It was the way they treated Christ himself when in the world, but he rose upon them to their confusion; and so shall the church in like manner, and according to their measure, Psalm xxii. 12, 13.

4. Darkness causeth weariness, and a dark land will always be a weary land to the children of light. The world at best is but a dark land, in comparison with heaven: 1 Cor. xiii. 12, "For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face." But sometimes the darkness increaseth mightily. We have had a long sunshine of gospel-light, but men have loved darkness rather than light. And now God is rising up to plead with the generation; and we may say, with Jeremiah, "Woe unto us, for the day goeth away, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out." Do ye not see the darkness come, and coming on the land more and more? There is a

dark cloud already cast over the ministers and professors of Scotland; so that they have now been like a company of travellers in a mist; some crying this, and others that is the way; while many are at a stand, not knowing what hand to turn to. Hence there are an alienation of affection, divisions, and separations, amongst those who all profess that they are travelling to the same place, but cannot agree about the way. Terrible this at all times, but now especially, when the common enemy is at our gates, which should make us cease from these feuds, as it is said the beasts did, hare, dog, sheep, cat and rat, in the inundation of the Severn. Some pride themselves in these, but they will make the world a weary land to those that are led by the Spirit of truth and peace: Judges v. 16, "Why abidest thou among the sheep-folds, to hear the bleating of the flocks? For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart."

What shall we do in such a case? Get in under Christ's shadow, by faith, renouncing our own understanding, passions, and prejudices, and giving up ourselves singly to his guiding, and his shadow will be as the shadow on the dial, pointing to the hour of the day: Psalm xxv. 9, "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way." In the greatest darkness of the world, there is a light, even "a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto we do well that we take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts," 2 Pet. i. 19. This oracle of heaven is never struck dumb; but at any time men's corruptions may make them both blind and deaf to its warnings. But again, the bushel is preparing to put the candle under, which God has lighted to give light to his church, if mercy prevent it not; and then people that have made themselves so many silent Sabbaths, will get them made to their hands; and they that have been wearying for the day, may come to get a weary fill of it. Preachers driven into corners, closed kirk-doors, and the songs of the temple turned into howlings, will make a dark day. And now, if God do not mercifully interpose, we cannot miss it. But Christ's shadow will be refreshing in this case to those that get under it. Though the enemy should get leave to tread down the outer court, and these that worship in it, they that are farther in shall be well seen to: Rev. xi. 1, 2. Though they should burn up all the synagogues of God within the land, yet there is a little sanctuary they cannot hinder you to carry about with you: Ezek. xi. 16, "Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God, Although I have cast them afar off among the Heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries

where they shall come." And though the stars should be stamped down to the earth, and no star-light shine in the church, ye shall not want light while the Sun of righteousness continues to shine.

Finally, The bottomless pit is already opened, the smoke is arising in our land, and the locusts are coming out of the smoke upon it: Rev. ix. 1—3. The Popish party are now begun to make head, with their brethren the malignants who carry on the war with Antichrist, and to set a limb of Antichrist upon the throne: and if they succeed, what can be expected, but that the smoke of Antichristian errors, superstition, and idolatry, will overspread these nations again? So that we must resolve either to take on the Beast's mark or Christ's fire-mark, either burn or turn. It will be weary work to get through the smoke, which it is to be feared will stifle most of us, and blacken many. But get under Christ's shadow now; seek now to believe, and feel the power of truth. An empty profession will not do here; lamps without oil will go out in the smoke. But be it ever so gross, it will hurt none but the profane and hypocritical professor: Rev. ix. 4, "And it was commanded them, that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree, but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads." They that have Christ's mark of true piety, shall be kept from receiving the mark of the beast. Under Christ's shadow they will be as the Israelites in Goshen; when darkness is over all the land, they shall have light in their dwellings.—The world is a weary land,

5. For blood and death going through it, make it a weary land. In heaven there are none of these things, it is the pleasant land, Rev. xxi. 4. But in the world they are very frequent; which often makes the weary sons of Zion to cry, "Woe is me now, for my soul is wearied because of murderers," Jer. iv. 31. The people that delight in war is a black character in the scriptures, Psalm lxviii. 30. The confused noise of the warriors is no pleasant sound, nor are garments rolled in blood a pleasant sight. The constant disquiet and terror that attends the sword's raging in a land, is a wearisome case, as it is described, Deut. xxviii. 67, "In the morning thou shalt say, Would to God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning; for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see."

The white horse of the gospel has for many years made a pleasant parade through the land. But alas! neither it, nor the crowned head, the Son of God, that sits upon it, has been much regarded; nay; both he, and his bow, which is the word, have been despised; few, very few, have given him a crown, Song iii. 11, by closing with

him in the gospel-offers. And now the red, black, and pale horses, mentioned Rev. vi. 4, 5, 8, seem to be ready to begin their march, to avenge the affronts offered to the white horse; though the Popish and malignant riders mean not so, but to banish the white horse out of the land. What shall we do in this case? get in under Christ's shadow, that is the only safe retreat in such a case: Mic. v. 5, "And this man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land." This should be our work this day; we should sit down under his shadow, believing in him, and depending upon him, Cant. ii. 3. When public calamity comes upon a land, every person will run to that place where they expect the greatest safety; but run where they will for shelter, if they run not to Christ, their shelters will fall down about their ears at length: Isa. xxviii. 17, "And the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the water shall overflow the hiding-place." But the way of safety is to run to Jesus Christ: Prov. xviii. 10, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." You must sit down under his shadow, by closing with him in the offers of the gospel, taking him for all, and instead of all, for time and eternity: giving yourselves away to him, renouncing the devil, the world, and the flesh, embarking in his interests and cause at this day, whoever be against it. This is a loud knock Christ is giving to gospel-despisers to open to him, after the slighting of many a still small voice, whereby he lets them know, that if they will not open to him as a Lord and Saviour, he will arise on them as a Judge with a vengeance, whether they will or not. Come, then, ye despisers of Christ, and sit down under his shadow, before the scorching heat of the weary land burn you up.

We must sit still under his shadow, by cleaving to him, and depending upon him: Isa. xxx. 7, "For the Egyptian shall help in vain, and to no purpose; therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still." Though the scourge reach all, the greatest safety will be there. Cleave to him and his cause, come what will come; for if you go off his way to seek safety, you cast yourselves out of his promised protection. Piety will be the best policy in the worst of times: Prov. x. 9, "He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely; but he that perverteth his way, shall be known." And depend on him by believing his promises, both for your personal case, and the church's case; for whoever be in the field, victory is in his hand alone, and he gives it to whom he will; he does what he will in the armies of heaven and earth; whom he will he strengthens, whom he will he weakens, for he is the Lord of hosts; and he hath engaged that at length it shall be ill

with his enemies, and well with his friends: Isa. liv. 17, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn; this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."—But again,

We must lie down under his shadow, in holy resignation, to suffer whatsoever he may call us to, Isa. li. 23. The dispensations of the day call aloud to us to prepare for suffering; if the malignant party prevail, doubt not but their little finger will be heavier than their father's loins. Our Lord has given many love-tokens to the generation, which have been lightly esteemed; howbeit, there are many that profess love to him and his truths; and it would seem, he will try what tokens we have to bestow on him and his cause. It is likely he will have a portion of some one's goods, relations, liberty, yea, and of their blood too, ere all be done; and it is to be feared, the tokens of his displeasure draw so deep, that many will give up with him on this account. But if you be wise, lie down under his shadow; for a thorny bed under Christ's shadow will at the last prove more easy than the beds of ivory on which his enemies may stretch themselves for a little; Job xx. 5, "The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment." The hour and power of darkness will not last; and though God should suffer that party to carry all before them a while, there is no ground to doubt but God will be even with them, for all their enmity, and opposition to his work; yes, and render home their father's opposition to it into their bosom, and give them blood to drink, for the blood their fathers shed in fields, and on scaffolds, when they have filled up the measure of their iniquity by what they may now do: Rev. xvi. 5, 6, "And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy."

But we must also stand up under Christ's shadow, and act for him. Certainly, as the quarrel is now stated betwixt Christ and his enemies in Britain and Ireland, he calls his people now to act for him and his cause. If *they* have a standard to be displayed for Popery and slavery, God has given us a standard to be displayed for religion and liberty: Psalm lx. 4, "Thou has given a banner to them that feared thee, that it might be displayed because of the truth." And people are called, by this dispensation, to put themselves in a posture to defend their religion and liberties, their Protestant King, country and families, and not to leave themselves a

naked prey for murderers. And in such a time, people consulting their own ease, more than the honour of God, the welfare of his cause, and their neighbour's safety, may easily slip themselves in under Meroz's curse, which, when incurred, will not be got so easily off persons: Judges v. 23, "Curse ye Meroz, (said the angel of the Lord), curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

Never was the cause more clear in Britain. The word, to spirit the soldiery under the enemies' standard, should be, The great red dragon, Rev. xii. 3, and the motto corresponding with this, as in Psalm ii. 3, "Let us break their bands, and cast their cords from us." This is the design of the attempt, and, I am persuaded, is looked upon so by Him that sitteth in the heavens. What else is the design of the Papists and malignants this day? Our holy religion must go, and idolatry and superstition come in its room; we and our families must be murdered, or renounce our religion, though denying of Christ will never altogether please them, for they will especially never trust Scotch Presbyterians, so that that would be the way to die a double death. Our Protestant King must go, and a Papist ascend the throne, and the covenanted work of Reformation be rooted out, unless that people act for their defence against the Antichristian party. I know no mids this day, but that every one must be on Christ's side, or on Antichrist's. This cause will bear no neutrality: Matth. xii. 30, "He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad."

Never was the cause more favourable; for while our intruders and enemies cannot appear in the field but as rebels and traitors, laying themselves open to all the pains of treason and rebellion, we have, by the mercy of God, the law on our side. No doubt, masses will be said at Rome for them, and in other parts of the Pope's territory; but the prayers of all the Protestant churches abroad will be for us and our righteous cause; and the prayers of all the godly in the land will also be in our favour. It is true, indeed, our God is angry with us; but sure I am, he is not well-pleased with them, he never was nor will be pleased with the cause they have in hand; and therefore, seeing the cause is the Lord's, we may be sure that "though he cause grief, yet he will have compassion;" and when he has done his work with his furnace on Mount Zion, he will bring off his cause and people victorious at length, Isa. liv. 17. And we have ground to hope, that if the noise of enemies go on, it will raise up at length a ghost upon the Popish and malignant interest in

these nations, that shall affright them, and ruin it more than ever; I mean, the ghost of the buried covenants.*

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

SERMON XXIII.

Isa. xxxii. 2,

And a man shall be—as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

Having, in the preceding discourse, offered several reasons why this world is to the saints a weary land, I go on now farther to observe, that the world is to them a weary land: For,

6. An ill way makes a weary land to travellers. There is much ill way in the world, that wearies sore them that are travelling Zion-ward. It is true, the way of holiness is a good way, in so far as it leads to the heavenly Jerusalem; and though it be strewed with thorns and briars, it is better to walk in it, than in the way to destruction strewed with roses. But an uneasy way we call an ill way; and such is the way through the weary land of the world. It is all up-hill, which scars the most part of the world. The way to hell is down the hill, but the way to heaven is up the hill: Psalm xxiv. 3, "Who shall ascend into the hill of God?" They that would sit at ease, and sleep through the world, are not meet for heaven; the way will try people's strength, and an easy way to heaven no man shall find. There are strong lusts, and temptations, and troubles, which people have to climb over. But under Christ's shadow, the traveller will recover his breath again, and be invigorated for new difficulties, till he come to the top of the hill: Isa. xl. 29, "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength." Ver. 31, "They that wait upon the Lord

* The intelligent reader, who is acquainted with the history of Britain, has only to be reminded, that the period when this discourse was delivered was very eventful. An unnatural rebellion was then breaking out, cherished by a Popish faction both at home and abroad, which in its progress threatened to overturn our religion and liberties. On this occasion, the worthy author, as a sound patriot for his country's welfare, as a genuine son of Zion, and a faithful watchman upon her walls, could not fail to sound a suitable alarm. From the deep sense he had of the impending danger, from a clear conviction of indispensable duty, and possessing a natural warmth of temper, the strong expressions made use of by him in this and other parts of his discourses, are easily to be accounted for.

shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

It is a narrow way: "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life," Matth. vii. 14. Multitudes walk in the broad way, and there they get room enough; but in the narrow way there are few travellers, and they that are on it must take good heed to their feet, or they are apt to catch a fall. And considering how rash we naturally are, and how weak-headed and false-hearted we are, and how narrow the road is, and how loose the ground about it is, it is no wonder, that with the Psalmist we complain of broken bones, Psalm li. 8. These make a weary way. But under Christ's shadow there is light for the blind, strength for them that go even on, and medicine to cure them that are bruised by their falls, if they intend not to lie still, but to get up and walk on.

It is a hard and rugged way, and therefore they must have leg-harness, as soldiers have, to preserve their feet from stones and roughness in the way of their march: Eph. vi. 15, "And their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." There are many difficulties to go through that will need resolution and undaunted courage. The spies saw such difficulties in the way to Canaan, that they brought up an ill report of the land. But Caleb and Joshua had another spirit, that fitted them to face all these difficulties, Numb. xiv. 24. The fearful are not for heaven, Rev. xxi. 8. But under Christ's shadow there is sweet refreshment in the hardest piece of the way, and nothing is too hard for them whom he bears up: Phil. iv. 13, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me."

It is a way wherein many snares are laid. The snares of the world make it a weary land. The way is beset with thorns, and lies through thickets, where on every side there is something to catch a man. There are snares in every lot, in every condition, in the most innocent things in the world; and there is need of great caution to get through them. How often are men in the snare ere ever they are aware! Like the poor bird they find the snare laid where they were not looking for it. But under Christ's shadow, there is a shelter where they may be safe. It is he that leads them through the wilderness to that place where they will be in no more hazard. Yea, casting themselves by faith on him, they are in no danger from any quarter whatever.—It may be further observed,

7. That the country-disease often makes it a weary land; and that, in the world, is sin. No sooner do any set their foot in that land, than are they infected with it: Psalm li. 5, "Behold I was

shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Though the power of this disease be broken in the saints at their conversion, yet it hangs about them as long as they are in the land. What wonder, then, that it be to them a weary land?—And there are five things that make it so.

(1.) The heaviness of the disease. It is called a body of death, Rom. vii. 24, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Death is heavy in any part of it, how much more burdensome must a body of it be? It bears down the man continually; it is a burden to the back, that makes him stoop, and so makes a weary land.

(2.) The universality of the disease. It affects and indisposes the whole man, so that we may say, Isa. i. 5, 6, that "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint; from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores." It spreads itself like a leprosy, through all the faculties of the soul, and leaves no part of the man unaffected. It has smitten the understanding with blindness, and the heart with hardness, and filled the mind with enmity against God. Job's life was a heavy life when he was full of boils all over; and so is the life of those who are universally affected with the disease of sin.—There is,

(3.) The frequent relapses that take place in this disease. How often do they fall back again when they seem to be in a fair way of recovery! This makes a weary world to a heaven-born soul, that would fain be like God in holiness; ever wrestling, and ever falling into the mire again, makes weary work. This makes that longing to be away for which the saint is distinguished.—There is,

(4.) The malignant influence these things have on the saints' journey through the weary land. By these means they are very much unfitted for it, they walk very slowly. It is a weary journey to them; and oftentimes they are so laid by, that they are not able to move forward at all, and they are driven back, instead of going forward.

(5.) It is not their case alone, but of all that are there, the being affected by this disease. The world is an hospital of souls sick with sin. Some of them are sensible of their disease, others are not. The godly have not only their own plague-sores running on, but they also see those of others running on: and that makes a weary land: Jer. ix. 2, "O that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of a wayfaring man, that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men." But under Christ's shadow, there is medicine for the sore. There is

balm in Gilead, and a physician there. His blood takes away the guilt, his Spirit takes away the power of sin; and in his holy promises they see their freedom and complete cure.—I observe,

8. That the scorching heats in the world make it a weary land. And there are these four kinds of scorching heat.

(1.) There is the fiery heat of desertion, from heaven. This the captain of our salvation met with in the weary land, Psalm xxii. 1—14; and this has often been the lot of the people of God in the weary land; they have lost sight of their guide, and have been left in darkness, and gone mourning many days, without the sun, with many a weary groan, Psalm vi. 6. Nay, there have been many positive outgoings of wrath against their souls, sparks of hell flying in on heaven-born souls, while they have been pressed under a sense of the Lord's anger, living, as it were, in the smoke of a furnace: Psalm cii. 3, "For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth."—There is,

(2.) The fiery heat of temptation from hell: Eph. vi. 12, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickednesses in high places." When the Israelites were in the wilderness they met with fiery serpents that bit them, Num. xxi. 6; and while we are in the wilderness of this world, we cannot miss the inflaming bites of the old serpent the devil. Satan is within bow-shot of us while here; and the tosses of temptation from him make it a weary land. Ordinary temptations are never wanting, but are coming through the weary land like midges in a hot summer-day. Sometimes there are extraordinary temptations, fiery darts, where the poor soul will be as much put to it, to defend itself, as one to defend a thatch-house against one casting fire-balls, as it were, without intermission.—There is,

(3.) The fiery trial from the men of the world, persecution. This is such an ordinary inheritance of the people of God in the weary land, that an apostle says, 1 Pet. iv. 12, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." There is much dross, together with the good metal, which gathers together in Zion, and therefore God will have a furnace there, and the wicked of the world to set it on, and blow it up, and professors must be cast into it to try them, some to be consumed, some to be refined in it: Zech. xiii. 9, "And I will bring the third part through the fire, and refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried; they shall call on my name, and I will hear them; I will say, it is my people, and they shall say, the Lord is my God."—There is,

(4.) The fiery heat of contention and division from the altar, mentioned Rev. viii. 5. These have a sort of malignant influence on the church; they scorch and blacken her exceedingly: Song i. 6, "Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me." Hence you may see the dreadful mischief which it does, Rev. viii. 7, 8, "There followed hail and fire, mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth, and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up." Though the way be long and sore, the travellers may be hearty, and they may go pleasantly on, while they are comfortable to one another; but when they grow a burden to one another, when their unity and love among themselves are gone, that makes a weary way to travellers. But never was the shadow of a great rock more suitable to the scorched traveller, than Christ is to his people in all these cases.—For,

(1.) He is their great plight-anchor in desertion, their hope, and the support of their souls. His blood is the great fence, under which they shelter themselves from the fire of the law, and brings them into hope, when they are next door to desponding. An absolute God is a terrible, but God in Christ is a refreshing, sight.

(2.) He is their protector in temptation. Faith in Christ is a shield which quenches all the fiery darts of the wicked, Eph. vi. 16. He is stronger than the strong man, and a present help in time of temptation, either to repel the tempter, or else to bear up the tempted. He says to them, "My grace is sufficient for you, and my strength is made perfect in your weakness," 2 Cor. xii. 9.

(3.) He is their strong tower in persecution, where they abide, and stand out against all the storms of an enraged world. He gives them peace, when their enemies are carrying on the war. "Peace" says he, "I leave with you; my peace I give unto you." He makes their bow to abide in its strength when the archers shoot at them, Gen. xlix. 24; and makes them more than conquerors, Rom. viii. 37; and so lines the thorny crown with his love, that it sits very soft on their heads.

(4.) He is their peace in time of contention and division. With whomsoever they have war and strife, through him they have peace, peace with God, peace with conscience, and a hopeful prospect of getting thither,—where light shall be perfect, and where therefore there can be no difference of judgment;—where love is perfect, and therefore no alienation of affections among the inhabitants shall prevail.

9. Scarcity of provisions makes this world a weary land. What else can be expected in the waste howling wilderness of this world,

where, though there is enough to raise the appetite of lusts, and a sufficiency of husks for swine to feed on; yet provision suitable for the soul is very scarce; and this is what makes the world to the saints a weary land. For oftentimes their table is overturned; the table of public ordinances is removed, which brings a famine of the word by which their souls should live, Amos viii. 11, 12. Then they may be sent to seek bread for their souls with the peril of their lives; and this makes a weary land to these that know the spiritual sweetness of gospel ordinances.—Again, many times when they come to the table of ordinances, they get nothing at all, not a mess from the King's hand, less or more. How often are prayers, sermons, communions, like the empty chair of state, the king not filling it; like the empty grave, where the grave clothes lie, but the Lord himself is gone; so that there is nothing substantial with which to satisfy the hungry soul.—Finally, at their best entertainment in the weary land, they ordinarily rise hungry, and with an appetite. They are held short by the head, and it is but drops and sips that are got in this world; the full feast, where they shall hunger no more, is reserved to the pleasant land, where there is fulness of joy, and pleasures evermore. But in this respect Christ is a suitable shadow, he keeps the soul from fainting; rather than they should want, bread shall be sent from heaven, and water shall flow out of the flinty rock: "Open thy mouth wide," says he, "and I will fill it," Psalm lxxxi. 10. He has the keys of heaven, and is the great steward of the Father's treasures, who, in the greatest scarcity, has enough amply to furnish those who by faith come to him.

10. Little company in the road to Zion makes it a weary land to the traveller thitherward. The multitude go all the other way; few take the narrow road. Christ's flock is but a little flock; in Elijah's days there were so very few upon the road, that he thought he had been all alone; he had so little help of the seven thousand, that he knew not of them. See how Micah longed for company on the road, but they were hid out of his view, Micah vii. 1, and downwards. Now, this circumstance makes it a weary land; for at this rate the traveller has few to take a lift of his burden, and bear it with him. The apostle says, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." But alas! we are in a strange land, and there are many to lay a load above a burden, but few to take a lift of it. But people must even creep under their own burdens as they can, and keep to it themselves. This is what makes a weary world. But they are not to be moaned in this case, who get in under Christ's shadow; he can bear them, and their burden also. The Lord even reduces his people to this case, that they may depend the more upon

himself. When we have created props standing about us, we are ready to lay over much weight on them, and therefore the Lord suffers people to find their own weight, that they may be constrained to employ himself, to put the work in his own hand.—Again, the traveller has few to consult with, when he comes to a difficult and dark step. There are such steps which Christians meet with in their way to Zion, and it is no small mercy to have those who will help by their sympathy, advice, and prayers. But, alas! the unfeeling world affords few such; and this is what makes it a weary land. But Christ lives, and he lives to be a counsellor, an interpreter, one among a thousand. Therefore, let us not complain in this case: Mic. iv. 9, "Now, why dost thou cry out aloud? is there no king in thee? is thy counsellor perished?" They are well-guided whom Jesus guides; and if he do not guide us, we may blame ourselves, for, "the meek he will guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way," Psalm xxv. 9. Let us go to the oracle, and improve his prophetical office.—Finally, they have few to keep them out of languor by the way. It would be a great comfort to the weary traveller, to have the benefit of conference about the holy city, the New Jerusalem, to which the travellers are going, and of the glory, ease, and rest, that are to be enjoyed there; it would tend to comfort and stir them up to vigorous walking. But they are not alone, who have Christ with them; he can bear the soul company by his word and Spirit, he can keep them from languishing in the weary land.—We now proceed,

III. To shew in what respects Christ is a suitable and refreshful shade or shelter. The truth is, there is nothing in Christ but what affords a refreshful shade to the believer in the weary land: Song v. 16, "Yea, he is altogether lovely." But the breaking of the spices will make them the more fragrant to those that have their senses spiritually exercised. Therefore observe,

1. That his very name affords a broad shade for the refreshment of the traveller in the weary land, sufficient to recover the soul that is swooning away: Song i. 3, "Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth,-therefore do the virgins love thee." When Moses would see the glory of God, the Lord proclaimed his name before him: Exod. xxxiv. 6, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." His name is more glorious than if it were written in letters of gold; it is written to us in letters of his precious blood. The truth is, all things in the world are rather names than things, the

most desirable things in it are the name of nothing: Prov. xxiii. 5, "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings, they fly away as an eagle toward heaven." The terrible things of it are but frightful names, 2 Cor. vi. 9, 10; but here is a name "that is above every name," Phil. ii. 9. I shall mention only three instances.—His name is,

(1.) Jesus, a Saviour: Matth. i. 21, "His name shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." How sweet must this name be to a sensible lost sinner! in the world we hear of Adam the destroyer, who ruined himself and all his posterity; of sinners, his children, self-destroyers, Hos. xiii. 9; of Abaddon, the great destroyer, who goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. But to all these we may comfortably oppose Jesus the Saviour; stronger than Adam, saving those that he destroyed; stronger than sinners, helping those that have destroyed themselves; stronger than Satan, whom he spoils of his prey: Isa. xlix. 25, "Thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered; for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children."—His name is,

(2.) Messiah, or Christ, the anointed of the Father, pointing at his three offices. For under the Old Testament, prophets, priests, and kings were anointed; it signified their call to the office: so that in this name we see him in all his offices, called to the Mediatory office by the Father, and fully furnished for it; and so there is enough in him for all our needs, to be drawn forth by faith in his name. And we have it in Greek, as well as in Hebrew, shewing that the Gentiles, as well as the Jews have access to him: John i. 41, "We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ."—His name is,

(3.) Immanuel, God with us, Matth. i. 23. If we press this name by faith, the sap of it will come forth to the believer in three things. —There is,

1*st*, God in our nature: John i. 14, "And the word was made flesh." God made man; Satan having withdrawn man from his allegiance, the whole human nature was corrupted, and set at enmity with God. But, behold in Christ the divine and human natures united, heaven and earth joined together in him, under the shade of which sinners may, with comfort and confidence, approach to God.—There is,

2*dly*, God reconciled to us in Christ: John i. 14, "And dwelt among us;" (Gr. tabernacled.) Christ is the tabernacle of meeting, wherein God and sinners meet in peace: Rev. xxi. 3, "Behold, the

tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." There the weapons fall out of the hand of justice, and there the arms of mercy embrace the sinner. When the sinner comes there, he is out of the dark and black region, where death, wrath, and the curse reign; he comes into a place of light, the light of the Lord's countenance, that shines on sinners in the face of Jesus, our Immanuel. O what a blessed shade is here! —There is,

3*dly*, God on our side: Psalm xlvi. 7, "The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge." Under this shade, believers may bid defiance to all their enemies, the united powers of earth and hell: Rom. viii. 31, "If God be for us, who can be against us." This is the best shade the Lord's people can betake themselves to in a time of confusion and danger. Before the wars of Canaan began, the Lord brought Joshua under it, Josh. v. 13, 14. And if people could be got awakened out of their sleep upon these pillows which their enemies have laid under their heads, the directing them to this shadow by the word would be both reckoned sweet and seasonable, as Exod. ix. 20. This was the shadow Isaiah directed the people to, when the news came that the malignant Ephraimites, and the idolatrous Syrians, were confederated to war against Judah, and to set up a king of their own stamp over Judah: Isa. vii. 2—6, "And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim; and his heart was moved, and the hearts of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind. Then said the Lord unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shear-jashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field, and say unto him, take heed, and be quiet, fear not, neither be faint-hearted, for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the Son of Remaliah. Because Syria, Ephraim, and the Son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee, saying let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal." The prophet labours to draw them to this shadow, as a complete defence against the scorching heat of these two smoking firebrands; for he says, Isa. viii. 10, "Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought, speak the word, and it shall not stand, for God is with us," (Heb. Immanuel is with us.)

2. His natures afford a broad shade to the traveller in the weary land; he is both God and man. Jesus, he is man, and as such he has a sympathy, as one that has had experience of the troubles

his people meet with in the weary land: Heb. iv. 15, "For we have not an high priest, which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." As he is God, he is able to give them all protection in all cases and all conditions. However low they be, his power, being infinite, is able to raise them up. So that, however unequally they be matched with devils and men, they may say, as 2 Kings vi. 16, "Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." When Christ sent out his apostles into the world, and knew that they would be opposed by the authority of the great ones, by the power, the learning, the prejudice, and superstitions of the world, over against all these he sets these emphatic words, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," Matth. xxviii. 20.

3. His offices are a shade to the traveller in a weary land. These are suited to all the cases his people can possibly be in, in the weary land.

He is a Prophet, to teach them, to lead and guide them: Isa. lv. 4, "Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people." If darkness arise, he is light to them that sit in darkness. There is no case so perplexed, but he can resolve it; and faith can begin where sight ends; and his direction will ever be ready to his own in the time of need: "It shall be given them in that hour, what they shall speak," Matth. x. 19.

He is a Priest to purge away sin, and manage his people's cause in the court of heaven. If guilt sting the conscience, and make a sick soul, his blood removes the sting: it purges the conscience from dead works, Heb. ix. 14: it heals all their wounds: Isa. xxxiii. 24, "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." If they have a petition to present before the Lord, while Jesus lives, they know of a proper hand in the court of heaven, into which they can put it. For he makes intercession for us; he is our Advocate with the Father. This is no small comfort in the weary land.

He is a King, to protect and defend them, to conquer and restrain all his and their enemies. If Satan be too strong and subtle for them, yet Jesus is stronger than he, and can outwit him, and even outshoot him in his own bow. His grace is sufficient against the greatest temptations. If the world, the men or things of the world, be too hard for them, Jesus has overcome both. And though they may be ready to cry out for fear of these, that one day they will perish by their hands, yet their great Captain being on their head they shall surely come off victorious at last, saying, "Thanks be to

God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

4. His purchase affords shelter in the weary land. The price he paid was his own precious blood; the purchase then must needs be great, seeing the price was of infinite value. He has purchased for his people all that is necessary to make them happy. What Adam lost, Christ has purchased again, and that with advantage; so that all their losses are made up in him. Would you have the inventory of Christ's purchase? you have it, 1 Cor. iii. 22, "Whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours." The best things for their enjoyment in time or through eternity. The worst things, through him, work for your good. What a refreshing shade, then, is this in the worst of times!

5. His relations afford shelter in a weary land. He stands in many near relations to his people: he is the foundation on which they are built, and therefore, as the house built on the rock stands unshaken, so he will support them under all pressures. He is their Father, and will allow them their provision, he will afford them protection, an inheritance, and every thing that children may expect from a father. He is their Husband, and therefore will be their defence: yea, their Head, and therefore he will guide them, and every way tenderly care for them, as the head does for the several members of the body.

6. His covenant and promises afford shelter in a weary land. The covenant is offensive and defensive, therefore the believer has common friends and enemies with the Lord himself: Zech. ii. 8. He that toucheth his people toucheth the apple of his eye. Hence, said Jesus, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Who would not venture to sea in that ship in which Christ himself, his interest, and his glory, are embarked; for though the ship in that case be beset with waves, it will not sink. Cæsar, when embarking on board a ship to pursue his enemy, to encourage the pilot, who was afraid of the storm, cried out, You have Cæsar and his fortune embarked with you. How much more may the Christian not be afraid in the greatest storm, when Christ, his interest, and his honour, are with him. There are promises in the covenant suited to every case. The Lord has secured to his people protection and provision in the worst of times: "He shall dwell on high, his place of defence shall be the munition of rocks; bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure."

He has secured them against apostacy: John x. 29, "No man (says he) shall pluck them out of my Father's hand." He has promised strength to the weak and fearful, Isa. xl. 29—31;

he hath promised his presence to be with them for ever, Heb. xiii. 5; Isa. xliii. 2, he hath promised that all things shall work together for their good, Rom. viii. 28; and finally, there is nothing whatever which can befall them in the weary land, but there is something in the covenant and the promise suited to it, peculiarly calculated to comfort and support them under every pressure.

It remains that, as was proposed,

IV. I make some practical improvement, which I shall do,

1*st*, In an use of information, and,

2*dly*, In an use of exhortation.

For an use of information we may see,

1. That it is a black mark of a soul, that has no more to look for as a portion but the world; when they take so well with the world's entertainment, that they never seek after Christ. The world is not the weary land to them, and so they care not for Christ. Are there not many who would desire no better portion than the world, if they could get it kept? They could well renounce their pretensions to Canaan, if they could get their tents to stand always on this side Jordan: they would never desire a better heaven than their lordships, their farms, or what else they can work for with their own hands. While these things prosper with them, they have nothing to make the world a weary land to them; the country's disease never wearies them; and if they be crossed in one worldly thing, they do not go to Christ to get comfort under it, but to some other worldly thing. This speaks, that they are at home in the world, and are not travelling towards Zion. Others may be pilgrims in it, but they are not; they are just where they would be, and have no other choice, Psalm iv. 6. It shews also that they would never look near Christ, if death did not make sure of their being turned out of the earth. They have no love to Christ for himself, they could fend well enough without him, if he would but let them alone in the world.

2. See here the mystery of the Christian life. Why do true Christians so condemn the world? It is a weary land to all such. What keeps them all under the tribulation of the world, while others faint, so that they have had a joy in tribulation, took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, yea, and even death itself? Why, under the shadow of the great Rock, they got meat to eat the world knew not of.

3. See the transcendent excellence of Christ. What a precious one must he be in whom there is enough to balance all the miseries of the weary land! There are some of these that nothing under the sun can balance; what avails all the riches and honours under

the sun, to a person under extreme bodily distress, or exposed to the arrest of death. But in the most wearisome step of the weary land, Christ is a refreshing shade.

4. This lets us see, where there is a shelter to be found in the worst of times, against the stormy tempest of public or private calamity: John xvi. 33, "These things (says Jesus) I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace; in the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." In Jesus Christ our safety lies, and without him there is no safety. Here is the rock that is higher than we, and higher too than the highest of our enemies, whether devils or men.

I have only now to add an use of exhortation. I would exhort you to come to Christ, and put yourselves under his shadow this day. And that you may understand what you are called to, take it in the following advices.

1. Lay aside your security, and see that you stand in need of a shade for refreshment and for protection in the weary land. However lightly people look on the confusions of our day, I think we have no reason to be secure; security is dangerous, seeing the sins of the generation are crying sins, crying for a stroke. Whatever has brought a stroke on a church or people, that is not wanting in Scotland this day. Did universal corruption amongst all ranks bring the deluge on the old world? that is visibly the plague of this generation. Did the despising of the gospel bring the Roman armies on the Jews? Matth. xxii. 7, the monstrous profanity amongst some, and loathsome formality among others, says we cannot escape, though God bear long with us.—The many deliverances we have met with when at the brink of ruin, and yet the generation not bettered by them, says that the axe, which has been lying so long at the root of the tree, will be wielded against us at the last: Amos iv. 11, 12, "I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning; yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. Therefore thus will I do unto you, O Israel! and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!" We are manifestly pining away under spiritual plagues at this day, many given up to vile affections, the generation generally plagued with hardness of heart and deadness, men are turned hateful, and left to hate one another, biting and devouring one another, all which is an evidence, that there is an evil spirit amongst us.—Finally, our security in the face of alarming dispensations, is a terrible token, according to that in 1 Thess. v. 3, "For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail

upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape."—I would exhort you,

2. To embrace Jesus Christ, and lay hold on the everlasting covenant. Ye that are strangers to Christ, come in at length. Let the state of your perishing souls come into your minds in earnest, and lay a sure foundation for eternity. Ye who have already come, come nearer and nearer, renew your acceptance of Christ, and stir up the grace of faith, that for the present is lying in such a weak state.

3. Repent of your sins, and turn from them. Amend your ways and your doings, and let not iniquity be your eternal ruin. Answer the call of God at length, that there may be no standing controversy betwixt God and you. Many delays have been in this matter, bring it now to a point, and halt no more betwixt two opinions, whether to be for God or for your lusts.—In a word, I exhort you,

4. To lay the weight of your through-bearing through the weary land over on Jesus Christ.—Look before you to the difficult steps that may be yet betwixt you and the grave, and solemnly take him for all you need or may need. Be concerned to depend upon him, and to trust in him, that he will not cease caring for you, and working in you, till he completely accomplish all that good word upon which he has caused you to hope.—To prompt you to this good work, I would propose the following motives:—

1. This is the shade God the Father has provided for you. "I have (says he) laid help upon one that is mighty," Psalm lxxxix. 19; and you hear what he says to you in the text. Therefore, honour the Father by coming to his Son, and putting yourselves under his shadow. He knew sinners would need a shelter in the weary land. O neglect not the offered salvation!—Consider,

2. That all other shadows are and will be but vain and vanishing ones; they will not be able to defend you from the ills to which you are exposed in the weary land; they will be like a hut built within the sea-mark, which will be carried away, together with the inhabitant, when the waters begin to flow: Isa. xxviii. 17, "The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place." Then your own wisdom will be but folly, your strength weakness, your carnal schemes shall not profit you.—Consider,

3. That the wrath of God will pursue all who are not under this shadow. O Christless sinners! what will you do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what will you answer him? He is a consuming fire, all else you can put betwixt him and you will be but as stubble, or at best but a partition-wall of dry boards, that will quickly be consumed in that devouring fire.—Consider,

4. That whatever weary steps ye meet with in the weary land, these will be doubly heavy by your not coming in under Christ's shadow; for the curse will be in them; and though they were very light in themselves, that will make them heavy. You will get all your burden to bear alone, as Saul did. And, O what a sad case it is to have heaven and earth dark both at once! Isa. viii. 21, 22. —Consider,

5. That all the travellers to Zion have made this shade their shelter. It is a tried shade in all ages of the church, Psalm xc. 1; whoever pursues them, this is the refuge of all the people of God in all times: Prov. xviii. 10, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." The spouse of Christ looks for this shade, Song i. 7, 8, and ii. 3: and many a good word they have spoken of it to recommend it to others.—Consider,

Lastly, That under Christ's shadow there will be safety in the most wearisome parts of the weary land. He is the Saviour, and there is none besides him. Under his shadow there is safety from troubles, when they are flying very thick in the weary land. He can hide his people in the hollow of his hand in the midst of danger, Psalm xci. 7. For he has all things at his command; men and devils are under the check of his providence. There is oftentimes a moderation of troubles.—Under this shadow people find, that though they be not quite freed from them, yet they are made very moderate to them: Jer. xv. 11, "The Lord said, Verily, it shall be well with thy remnant, verily I will cause the enemy to entreat thee well in the time of evil, and in the time of affliction." And sometimes it is much better for his people to meet with this moderation, Jer. xlv. 5. The life for a prey is no small mercy. While his people rest under this shadow, there is always a spiritual salvation from the sting of evil; thus the nature of afflictions is altered, and the sharpest and heaviest stones thrown at them become precious stones, which do them no hurt, but rather good; for "who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" 1 Pet. iii. 13.—To sum up all in a word,

There is never missed here an eternal salvation. However they be treated in the weary land, none go to hell from under Christ's shadow; but though they should go through fire and water, they will land at last in Abraham's bosom, and be brought unto the wealthy place. Amen.

THE EVIL AND DANGER OF HALTING BETWIXT TWO OPINIONS. *

SERMON XXIV.

1 KINGS xvi. 21,

And Elijah said, How long halt ye betwixt two opinions?

AMONG the crowds of irreligious men in the visible church, there are few, if any, so positively determined against God and religion, as never to have a thought of repentance and reformation. Reason and interest appear so much on the side of religion, that where conscience possesses any power at all, one can hardly fail in having sometimes favourable thoughts on that side. But indecision and unsettledness in that weighty matter ruins men. It is so long ere they come to a point, that death often overtakes them before they have got the matter fixed; and they are set beyond the possibility of doing any thing for their souls, before ever they have resolved firmly what to do for them. The text is Elijah's expostulation with a great assembly in that dangerous case. The worship of Baal was set up, and authorised in Israel by Ahab, and patronised by his courtiers. Thence the body of the people, though they did not utterly renounce the worship of Jehovah, yet they were greatly corrupted with that idolatry. God had on this account sent a famine on them, and, though it had continued three years and a half, it had not reformed them. But Ahab lays the blame of this calamity on Elijah; Elijah retorts it boldly on him. They agree that all Israel be gathered with Baal's priests, who were dispersed over all the country, and the priests of the groves, who were Jezebel's chaplains, that the whole matter betwixt God and Baal, Elijah and Ahab, might be decided. The assembly being convened, Elijah comes to them, and, without observing any ceremony, or beginning to intercede with God for rain to them, he falls a-pleading God's cause with them, expostulating with them on God's behalf, as in the text: "How long (said he) halt ye betwixt two opinions?"

In which expostulation, we have,

I. The matter of it; their halting betwixt two opinions. Here he attacks them on two points, and charges them with a grievous fault, an unaccountable weakness in the most weighty concerns of their souls.—He charges them,

(1.) With weak and wavering heads. They had two opinions; by the one they had a value for Baal, by the other for Jehovah. Not only did some of that people in their judgment declare for Baal,

* Maxton, Saturday, August, 2, 1718.

others for Jehovah, but the same persons at one time thought it best to follow Baal, at another time Jehovah; they were undetermined in this matter of the greatest importance. Their thoughts in this case were wavering, going hither and thither, like top-branches of trees going with the wind, which is the Holy Ghost's own metaphor in the original word of the text.—They were chargeable,

(2.) With unsteady feet. They halted betwixt these two, and they went from Baal to the Lord, and from the Lord to Baal again. Thus, passing from side to side, they were poor lame souls, (this is the Holy Ghost's own metaphor), they did not only limp, like men lame of one leg, (the best Christians carry such a halt with them, till they come to the grave), but they were like men lame of both legs, for this is the import of the original word, 2 Sam. iv. 4. They crooked to both sides, they went wavering from side to side, never straight, one time they were for Baal, another time for Jehovah, they were never steadily fixed.—In the expostulation, there is,

2. The manner of it: "How long will ye halt?" &c. They had been several years in that case, and yet were not come to a point. One might think the case was not so very difficult, whether Jehovah or Baal should be their choice; but wonder not at it, for the case is even as plain betwixt the Lord and your lusts and idols, yet year after year you cannot come to a point. The phrase is urgent; it imports,—the shamefulness, the baseness of their conduct, that they should be so long in deciding in a matter so very clear, stumbling at that rate in broad day-light;—its grievousness to the Spirit of God; he was so weary with bearing with them, that he would fain have them come to a point, and therefore rouses them up to it.

From the expostulation thus explained, I would observe the following doctrines, viz.

Doct. I. That to be still wavering and undecided in the absolute and final choice betwixt the Lord and idols, is most abominable.

Doct. II. That an unequal and unsteady walk, here-away, there-away, betwixt the Lord and idols, is an unaccountable and abominable way of walking through the world.—These I shall shortly consider in their order.

Doct. I. That to be still wavering and undecided in the absolute and final choice betwixt the Lord and idols, is most abominable.—In speaking to this I shall only drop a few things,

I. For explication of the point.

II. For confirmation of it. And then,

III. Make some application.—I am,

I. To explain the point.—In order to this, consider,

1. That the Lord and idols are suitors for the heart of every man and woman that hears the gospel; and because that idols have the first love, they strive to retain it, and the Lord comes to recover it. Lusts court it, and therefore the gospel teaches to deny them, Tit. ii. 12, "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and while it thus teaches, it brings a better offer. The devil, the world, and the corrupt nature, are proxies to agent for our lusts: the Lord's Spirit, his ministers, and conscience, act for the Lord.—Consider,

2. That the sinner's heart is urged with offers and arguments on both hands. God makes his offers, and urges them with the strongest arguments, taken from the certainty of eternal happiness, or misery, of enjoying his unspeakable love, or incurring his dread displeasure: Isa. lv. 2, "Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your souls delight themselves in fatness." Satan is not behind hand in pains to urge his offers, he plies them with allurements of present profit and pleasure, most suited to the corrupt heart, which naturally gapes for them.—Consider,

3. That there can be no enjoying of both together: Matth. vi. 24, "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." The Lord will not deal shares with lusts and idols, the offer is peremptory on other terms, "If ye take me, let these go." If the matter could be agreed betwixt the Lord and his rival idols, the wavering soul would soon be at a point, and would embrace both. But that cannot be: if the Lord be received, he must have the crown, and the most beloved lusts must be nailed to the cross: Gal. v. 24, "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts."—Consider,

4. That the matter must be determined by the sinner's free choice: Josh. xxiv. 15, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." The Lord will not take possession without the sinner's consent, for it is the heart he seeks, and if that be wanting, there is no bargain. And the choice must be an absolute and a final one; there must be a final deciding of this cause, so that thereafter the soul may cleave to the one, with full purpose of heart, and altogether abandon the other.—Consider,

Lastly, That the Lord requireth the sinner's decided answer. But here the sinner wavereth; he is neither determined to give up altogether with the Lord, nor to give up wholly with his lusts; sometimes he is almost persuaded, but never altogether. So there comes

still one off-put on the back of another; and when the sinner has been at the advising and deciding this business days and years, he is as far from a point the last day as the first.—I am now to propose some considerations,

II. For confirmation of this point.—Consider,

1. That there is no competition here in point of real value. What is the dead idol Baal, in comparison with Jehovah, the living God? What are our filthy lusts, in comparison with Christ? Jer. xxiii. 28, "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully: what is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord." It is a disgrace on our reason, to put them in the balance together, and argues a fearful blindness with which mankind are seized, once to entertain a doubt which to choose.—Consider,

2. That it is ingratitude of the deepest dye, not readily to fall in with the offer. When the potter is making suit to his own clay, the mighty God to his own creature worm man, to put off his offer, because of the craving of the heart after filthy lusts, these brats of hell, and spawn of the old serpent, is certainly ungrateful. The Lord might have left us with them, to have made the best of them we could, which would have been no better than death; for what else could have resulted from our drinking that cup of poison? But now, when he comes to offer us life, how horrible is it to be wavering and undetermined, whether we will accept of the Lord and life, or not!—Consider,

Lastly, That this warning is on a matter of the utmost weight, and what we have not one to-morrow allowed us to advise upon. Our souls lie at stake, eternal salvation or damnation depend on our choice; if we make the Lord our choice, we are happy for ever; if ye do not, we are ruined for ever; it is, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice," Psalm xcv. 7; so that, if death carry you off undetermined, your eternal destruction is unalterably fixed; and what an abominable thing is it, then, to be still wavering?—I now proceed,

III. To make some application of the subject. And with this design, I would expostulate with you halters and undetermined sinners, who are not yet come to a point in the matter of your choice betwixt Christ and your lusts, in the words of the text, "How long halt ye betwixt two opinions?" How long will it be ere you come to a point how to dispose of that heart of yours? You have had many rich gospel-calls from the Lord, and many communion-calls, and yet you have not freely abandoned your idols, and made choice of the Lord, to this day. Still you are halting, undetermined, and wavering. How long shall it be thus?—In managing this expostulation, I would ask,

I. Who are the wavering, undetermined halters betwixt the Lord and their lusts?—I answer,

(1.) Ye who to this day never found the time to break your covenant with your lusts, and to enter into covenant with God, either in pretence or reality. Are there not some here, who never gave their personal consent to the baptismal covenant, who are utter strangers to personal covenanting with God in Christ? they have not even expressly in words renewed the covenant made for them in baptism, much less have they ratified it with their own solemn consent before the Lord: they are woeful halters, but without making this choice they can never see heaven: Eph. ii. 12, "Strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."—Ye are the wavering,

(2.) Who time after time slight the sacrament of the Lord's supper, not preparing yourselves to partake of it. What makes you always and constantly mere spectators and onlookers of the seal of the covenant, and that solemn engagement to be the Lord's, but that you are halters betwixt the Lord and your lusts? Were there a bargain in your offer, of which all the partners were obliged to strike hands with the party that makes it with them, and you stood by, and would not give your hand; would not that prove you not to be determined as yet for the bargain? You would be glad to have the bargain ratified betwixt God and you, if you were really for it; Psalm lxviii. 31, "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands to God."—To this some may object,

We would fain take the sacrament, but they will not give us tokens of admission.—To this I answer,

What hinders your receiving them, but your gross ignorance, or your ungodly and scandalous life, which certainly ought to do it: Matth. vii. 6, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs." But why do not ye get the knowledge of God and religion, and reform your lives, that ye may sit down at the Lord's table? And here lies the matter, you are not so far determined yet as to quit your lusts, for all the communion with God that is to be had in the sacrament. —Such of you are halting,

(3.) Who have had your convictions of sin, and are in so far satisfied, that you should have given up with it, but your hearts were never brought to part with it to this day. Are there not many who are standing undetermined this day on the carcases of their murdered convictions? Acts xxiv. 25, "Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time, when I have a more convenient season, I will call for thee." They have been lashed by their consciences, to drive them to the Lord from their lusts; nay, they had

much ado to resist these lashings; but, after all, these impressions are worn off, and they are not yet determined.—Such are wavering,

(4.) Who have (often perhaps) been aiming at the covenant, but always stuck at one thing. You have been brought to a point in many things, but one thing you could never yet get over. O miserable halter betwixt God and the idol of jealousy! shall that one thing mar the winning of thy soul? If you be not content with all the articles of the covenant, without exception, you have your choice to make, yet you are not determined; Mark x. 21, "Jesus said unto him, One thing thou lackest," &c.—Such are halting,

(5.) Who are still at fast-and-loose with God, and whom nothing can bind, who do with their vows, as the dog with his collar, that slips it off and on as he pleases: Psalm lxxviii. 36, 37, "Nevertheless, they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant." There are many of our communicants of this sort, who come under the vows of God very lightly, and as lightly soon after slip out from under the tie; the truth is, they never consider the matter with due seriousness. They make choice of the Lord, but, in very deed, their hearts were never in earnest determined.—Such of you are wavering,

Lastly, And in a word, who have not expressly embraced God and Christ, but cleave to your lusts. Our Lord has often come to you in the gospel, requiring your last answer, but you have neither yet given it, nor will you either plainly say ye will betake yourselves to your lusts and idols for altogether, nor are you come the length of an honest resolve to give over with them for altogether. Ye are undoubtedly woful undetermined halters.

2. I must ask at you, How long will ye halt, and be undetermined?

(1.) Have ye not halted long enough already betwixt God and your lusts? 1 Pet. iv. 3, "For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles." Have ye not often enough sent away the Lord in his messengers groaning from you, because ye could not be won yet? (1.) Young halters, may not ye, after ten, fifteen, and twenty years, or more, be at a point whether ye will be the Lord's or not? I assure you, God has been at a point with many one in that time, who never got your length, but their states are determined in another world already, without possibility of alteration. Every seven years ye have been in the world, ye have had an year of Sabbaths, in these Sabbaths many, many a call. And will ye yet be undetermined? (2.) Old halters, may not ye be at a point, after thirty, forty, fifty, or sixty years ye have

taken to advise in? will ye halt on, till ye slip into a grave, into hell, undetermined. All the sermons ye have heard, the communions ye have waited on, even all the rods and the mercies ye have met with, have left you where they found you, as undetermined as ever, and will ye still go away this day as undetermined as ye came?

2dly, How can you be at ease as long as such a weighty matter is undetermined? Poor soul! while thou art halting, thou art standing on the brink of the pit, and whether death or life shall be thy lot, whether heaven or hell, is still as to thee undetermined. Till thou determine the point to be the Lord's, and to renounce all thy idols, Satan has the hold of thee, and there is nothing between death and thee but one step, thou hangest over the pit by the long-worn thread of divine patience; and whenever that gives way, thou art lost for ever: John iii. 36, "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

(3.) Do you not wonder, that God has waited so long upon you, that he has not taken your slights and scorns for your final answer? Is it not surprising, that he has not recalled his ambassadors, and denounced war against you, to be carried on for ever? Ye must needs wonder that it is not so, when ye consider the infinite greatness of him who makes suit to you, the meanness and vileness of those whom he courts, and the abominable competitors which ye prefer to him.

(4.) Are ye not afraid lest the Lord halt, and proceed no farther in seeking after you? that this may be the last call that ever you may get? Luke xiv. 24, "For I say unto you, that none of these men which were bidden, shall taste of my supper." Sit this call, and who knows but the Lord may from this time leave you to your lusts? Psalm lxxxi. 11, 12, "But my people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts and they walked in their own counsels." Hos. iv. 17, "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone." Saying, Cease my Spirit, cease conscience, ministers, ordinances, judgments, mercies; give that man no more disturbance in the embraces of his lusts, let them hang by him, and he by them, till they sink him into hell, and lie there as a mountain of lead on him for ever.

(5.) Do you not know, the longer you halt, it will be the harder to come to a point for God? the longer ye hold off from the Lord, you will be the more loth to come away; Prov. vi. 10, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep." He that is not fit this day, will be unfitter to-morrow; for lusts, through continuance, grow more and more strong, and the devil, that comes at first alone, afterwards his name is Legion, for they are many. I aver, that it had been telling many of us, that they had

struck the iron many years ago, when it was hotter than it is now.

Lastly, Halt as long as you will, you must not only be determined for the Lord, and against all your lusts, but also you must be joined to the Lord, and separated from them actually, else you are ruined for ever. The case is plain, Mark xvi. 16, "He that believeth not shall be damned."—Ezek. xviii. 30, "Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin."—Matth. xviii. 3, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." So, if you have any mind to be free from the wrath to come, unless you have a mind to take your hazard with your lusts through all eternity, while God is God, to pursue the quarrel for the slight ye put on him, you must come to a point, and be determined for God, and give up with all your lusts.

Now, Sirs, there are two things lying before you this day, of one of which you are to take your choice.

1. You must either give up with God, Christ, heaven, and glory, quit all your part in the covenant of grace, the purchase of Christ, and his death, freely, and betake yourselves to your lusts, idols, and sinful courses, and make the best of them you can to live and die with them. Satan is fond of your making this choice. Or,

2. You must give up with your lusts, idols, and sinful courses, freely quit your part in them, not excepting your darling lust, and betake yourselves to the Lord in his covenant, taking this day God the Father for your Father, God the Son for your Saviour, God the Holy Ghost for your Sanctifier, Christ for your Prophet, to be led by his word and Spirit; Christ for your Priest, to be saved by his obedience and death only; Christ for your King, to be ruled and governed by him according to his will absolutely. The Lord is willing that you make this your choice, and kindly invites the worst of you to it; Rev. iii. 20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and I will sup with him, and he with me." And ch. xxii. 17, "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come: and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Nay, he commands you to make this choice: 1 John iii. 23, "And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." And so earnest is he in this invitation, that he will pass all your former slights, if you will but now fall in with this offer: Ezek. xviii. 22, "All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned; in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live." Now, there is the choice in both parts, what say ye to it? Josh. xxiv. 15,

"Choose ye this day whom ye will serve."—I demand your answer. What answer shall I return?—your final answer, for I cannot say that ever our Master will send me again to you on this errand.—Are there any here,

(1.) Who will give that answer, Jer. ii. 25, "There is no hope; no; for I have loved strangers, and after them I will go." O Sirs! take your word again, we are loth to carry back that word; why will you die? why will you destroy yourselves? If we saw a cup of poison in your hand, which you would not part with, but would drink, we would flee to you, mix our blood with yours, before you should get it drunk; but what can we do in this case, but cry, O do yourselves no harm! and protest before God, angels, men, and your own selves, that your blood is on your own head.—Are there any here,

(2.) Who will give that answer, Jer. iii. 22, "Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God."—Job xxxiv. 32, "If I have done iniquity, I will do so no more." Then, I call heaven and earth to record, you are at a point for our Lord never to go back; that it is an everlasting bargain between God in Christ and you; that he is yours, and you are his; that although this bargain betwixt our Lord and you has been many times back and fore, it is now fully and finally concluded, you are married now, and there is no room for any other suitors. O come, then, to your Lord's table with a holy boldness, and get the covenant sealed!

Lastly, Is that your answer, Acts xxiv. 25, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee?" You say you will advise upon it. I declare we cannot take that answer: our commission does not bear us to indulge you even till to-morrow, in advising upon a matter of such importance: Heb. iv. 7, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Nay, we cannot allow you even another hour or half-hour in hesitation: 2 Cor. vi. 2, "Behold, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Give your answer, therefore, instantly, I peremptorily claim it; if you delay longer, you may be in hell ere to-morrow, nay, next hour, it may be, next moment. What do you hesitate upon?—whether you will obey God or the devil?—whether you will cast the kindled coals of hell out of your bosom, or not?—whether you will travel in that narrow road which leads to life, or in that broad road which will land you in destruction?—in short, whether you will live for ever, or perish eternally? Oh! Sirs, be wise before it be too late, halt no longer, I beseech you, betwixt these two opinions: "To-day if ye will hear his voice; harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, the day of tentation in the wilderness." When a gracious

God is now calling you, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel?" let the echo of your souls, and the answer of your tongues be, "Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God."

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.*

SERMON XXV.

1 KINGS xvi. 21,

Elijah said, How long halt ye betwixt two opinions?

IN the ordinance of the Lord's supper, there is to be seen Jacob's ladder, with its foot set on the earth, and the top thereof reaching unto heaven, GEN. xxviii. 12. We trust ye have been essaying to mount it, though perhaps ye are yet not far from the ground. O that ye may have freely entered upon the first step! I must, however, warn you, whoever ye be, that are looking upwards towards the place to which the top reaches, namely, heaven, that there is such a voice to you from heaven in our text, as came to David from the castle of Zion, when he set himself to win it, 2 Sam. v. 6, "Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither." 1*st*, Unless the blind mind and heart that is still wavering in the choice betwixt the Lord and idols be taken away, and thou canst be determined absolutely and finally for the Lord, ye cannot come in hither. Of this we have discoursed already.†—There is a *second* voice. Except the lame feet whereby one is still going from side to side in practice, betwixt the Lord and idols, be taken away, you cannot come in hither. To this we are now to attend, in considering,

DOCT. II. That an unequal and an unsteady walk, here-away there-away, betwixt the Lord and idols, is an unaccountable and abominable way of walking through the world.

In discoursing from this, it is proposed to shew,

I. What is to be accounted such a walking.

II. The evil of this way of walking.

III. The causes of this unsteady walking; when we shall also point out some remedies against it.

IV. Make some improvement.—I am,

I. To shew what is to be accounted such a walking.

* This discourse was delivered immediately after the celebration of the Lord's supper, in Maxton, August 3, 1718.

† See page 245.

1. Random-walking is such a walking: Lev. xxvi. 21, "And if ye walk contrary to me, and will not hearken unto me, I will bring seven times more plagues upon you, according to your sins." The original word, "contrary," may be rendered, as by accident, at random, at all adventures. There is a generation that are at best but random-customers to religion, who take no more of it than they readily meet with. Their religion sits so light on them, that in their way through the world they take it as it comes to them. As the fashion of the time turns, they face as the stream runs about. They conform themselves to the taste and humour of whatever company they fall in with: they become a prey to every temptation, and are picked up like straying beasts by the first finder. Beware of this: that day ye get to heaven in this way, God and Baal shall be reconciled. Set up your mark in religion, and press unto it. Lay down a principle for God, and hold by it, however times, companies, or temptations may seduce you: Phil. iii. 15, "I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Acts xi. 23, "And exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they should cleave unto the Lord;" that is, abide by his side with full purpose, laid down and determined beforehand.—I observe,

2. Wavering-walking is such a walking: Heb. x. 23, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith, without wavering." When men are still unsettled in their way, hither and thither, are wavering in their purposes and practice, one day for God, another for the devil, and their lusts like men in an ague, with their hot and cold fits by turns, at one time destroying what at another time they were building up, they are never fixed. Hence they will be one day at the table of the Lord, another at the table of drunkards. Like water-fowls, sometimes they will be soaring aloft towards heaven in the exercises of religion, and quickly again swimming in their lusts, and over head and ears in the cares, profits, pleasures, and vanities of the world. Sometimes they will appear so serious in religion, that one would think they would never go back again to their sinful courses: anon, they give themselves the swing in their sinful courses, as they would never look back again to religion. Take heed of this; waverers will never get up the hill to Zion: Jam. i. 6, 7, 8, "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering: for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." Go straight forward in the Lord's way, as one that is resolute for God and his way: Prov. iv. 25, 26, 27, "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thy eye-lids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of

thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left, remove thy foot from evil."—I observe,

3. Unequal walking is such a walking: Prov. xxvi. 7, "The legs of the lame are not equal." The parts of the conversation of many answer no better than a long leg and a short one do. In the church they are saints, at home they are devils; in their profession they are fair, in their practice they are foul and false; in their words the world is nothing, but in their affection it is their all. Their practice is made up of contradictions. They agree not with themselves, how can they with God? They pretend piety towards God, yet make no conscience of duty, mercy, and justice towards man: Matth. xxiii. 23, "Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye pay tithe of mint, anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not left the others undone." A wide conscience in substantials, and narrow in circumstantials of religion, is a conscience of a profane make. Beware of this; see the emblem of these folk, Prov. xxvi. 23, "Burning lips, and a wicked heart, are like a potsherd covered with silver dross." The potsherd will be broken in pieces at length. Labour to have your whole conversation of a piece, if ever you would see heaven: Jam. iii. 10, "Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so."—I observe,

4. Partial and divided walking is such a walking: Hos. x. 2, "Their heart is divided." They keep not with one master, but in some things serve the Lord, in other things their own lusts. They would make void the commands of God; some they will comply with, others they will not regard. They will strain at a gnat in some things, and in others swallow a camel. At a communion, or under a conviction, they say, as in Deut. v. 27, "Speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we will hear it, and do it." But when it comes to a labouring in their work, they will resolve to do, but they cannot: Prov. xx. 4, "The sluggard will not plough, by reason of the cold." They have their particular idols of jealousy, which they can by no means part with. Beware of this; be universal in your respect to God's commandments, otherwise you will be clothed with shame at length: Psalm cxix. 6, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments." The straight soul says, as in ver. 128, "I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way."—I shall now go on to shew,

II. The evil of this way of walking. I shall sum up this in these four things:—

1. It is a walking highly dishonourable and offensive to God: Rev. iii. 15, 16, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." How could an affectionate husband take it, to have his wife gadding after other lovers? And, O how dishonourable is it to God, that those who have given themselves away to him should be found hanging about the doors of the world, and their lusts? Friends' wounds pierce deepest; and therefore many do more dishonour God, and disgrace religion, by their uneven walk, their halting betwixt two opinions, than if they should go over entirely to the devil's side in the world: Ezek. xx. 39, "As for you, O house of Israel! thus saith the Lord God, Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts and with your idols."

2. It a walking which is most grievous and offensive to the serious and godly. With what concern does Elijah complain of it here! They are a heavy burden in the ship of the church of God; and the lighter they are in their fleeting and flowing, the heavier their case lies on serious souls: Psalm lv. 12, 13, 14, "For it was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it; neither was it he that hated me, that did magnify himself against me, then I would have hid myself from him. But it was thou, a man, mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in company." And no wonder, considering that the name of God is blasphemed by reason of such walkers; and they are the worst enemies religion has: Phil. iii. 18, "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and who mind earthly things." When two armies are in the field, as is the case betwixt Christ and the devil, absolute deserters are dangerous; but such as remain in the camp, yet keep up a correspondence with the enemy, are still more so.

3. It is a walking which is hardening to the wicked: Prov. xxviii. 4, "They that forsake the law, praise the wicked." They betray the cause of religion to them, and open their mouths to blaspheme and reproach the way of God: Rom. ii. 23, 24, "Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles, through you, as it is written." Do you think that your coming to a communion table, your waiting on ordinances, public, private, or secret, will ever commend the way of the Lord to onlookers, while you make not conscience of tender walking in the whole of your conver-

sation, even in your natural and civil actions? Nay, truly, the sinful liberty you take to yourselves, even as others, will make your religion loathsome to them. I have found some have been restrained from the table of the Lord by observing the unsuitable walk of others after a communion; but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed.

Lastly, It is a walking which is ruining to one's own soul. The generation that wandered in the wilderness died there; and waverers betwixt the Lord and their idols fall into the mire at length: Hos. vi. 4, 5, "What shall I do unto thee, O Judah? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew, it goeth away. Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets, I have slain them by the words of my mouth; and my judgments are as the light that goeth forth." It is to those that are faithful unto the death only that the crown of life is promised, Rev. ii. 10. Instability in the good ways of the Lord vexeth the Holy Spirit; whereupon he departs, then the soul withers, and is cast over the hedge at length. Many walk in a round betwixt their lusts and their duties while they live; and when they go out of the world they are just where they were when they came into it. As they were born in sin, so they die in it, and so tumble down into the pit.—I shall now point out,

III. The causes of this unsteady walking, going from side to side betwixt the Lord and idols; together with the remedies.

1. The want of a right set of the heart at first, is one cause: Psalm lxxviii. 37, "For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant." While these in the text had two opinions, and were not determined to one of them, they could not but halt betwixt the two. The heart that is never once freely separate from sin, so as to see it to be an evil, and the greatest evil, and to hate it for itself, that is, for its contrariety to God's holy nature and law, will make at best but a halting professor. If the duties of religion be desirable to them for one reason, the enjoyment of their lusts is so for another; and thus the heart being divided, the life is so too.

In this case the remedy is, to come once freely away to the Lord Christ, from all your lusts and idols: 2 Cor. vi. 17, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you." They who once thus part freely, will never halt again betwixt the two. Though they may have a weak side by reason of indwelling corruption, yet they have a sound side too, that is combating with that weakness: Gal. v. 17, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." And they

are in consequence longing for the victory: Rom. vii. 24, "O! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Unite with Jesus Christ, and you will walk in him; for where he is once freely chosen for a pilot to the ship, the sinner's course through the sea of this world will be completely managed; that soul will never be shipwrecked.

And now, if ye be in earnest not to halt any more, I give you an advice:—As soon as ye get home after this work is over, retire by yourselves, and consider where your weak side lies, what is that lust or lusts that is most likely to draw you over to its side again; and having seen it, consider how your soul stands affected to it, and labour by all means to make sure a final parting with it in your heart; that is, honestly and resolutely before the Lord to give up with it again for ever. And as for the void space which the renouncing that sweet morsel will make in your heart, fill it up with Christ himself, by taking him expressly in the room of that idol: Matth. xiii. 45, 46, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."

To this some may object, is there any saint in the world that is free of halting? *Ans.* There is a great difference betwixt the Christian's halting through weakness, and the halting through wickedness spoken of in the text, which is really more than halting, properly so called. The one is a halting like him that is lame of one leg, the other like him that is lame of both.—The Christian, whatever weakness he is attended with in his walk, is absolutely determined for God and holiness, in opposition to all his idols: the hypocrite wants this resolution of heart. The former longs, sighs, groans, and strives to get the victory over corruption; is never for truce and reconciliation betwixt the Lord and lusts, but for the extirpation of these lusts. But the latter is at bottom for both together, a reconciliation betwixt them, and cannot think to hold with the Lord without his lusts.—The Christian sinneth not with that full swing of heart the hypocrite doth. The former hath a sound side, a renewed part, which lusteth against the flesh, and so far resists the sway to the weak side; whereas the latter has nothing sound, and so sinneth with full consent of the will, however the conscience may reclaim and reprove.

2. Another cause is, unmortified lusts and light meeting together in the soul. An enlightened conscience puts it forward to God; unmortified, lively, reigning lusts, draw it back again. Thus one is tossed from side to side, as in the case of Pilate and Balaam: Job xxiv. 13, "They are of those that rebel against the light; they

know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof." Lusts rise against light, and thrust a man out of the paths thereof. It is with them as with David, in the battle against Absalom. Upon the one hand, it was hard to lose a kingdom: on the other hand, to lose a son: "Therefore deal gently," says he, "with Absalom." Even so here, they are loth to lose their souls, yet loth also to lose their idols. Hence they must do something for each of them.—In this case there is this

REMEDY:—Mortify your lusts, that you may trample on them, and follow the light: Col. iii. 5, "Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth," &c. Prune off these suckers, that ye may have a thriving soul. Deny their cravings, that ye may weaken and starve them. And that ye may be enabled to do this, let your conscience and your heart both together take up their rest in Christ by faith. Know, O sinner! there is enough in Christ for the boundless desires of thy heart, as well as for the cravings of thy conscience: Cant. v. 16, "His mouth is most sweet; yea, he is altogether lovely." Col. ii. 9, 10, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power."—Here some may reason,

(1.) How can that be? for, alas! there are many desires in my wretched heart, that are of such a carnal sort, that there can be nothing in Christ for them. *Ans.* Our Lord satisfies the desires of poor sinners, by enlarging such of them as are holy, fulfilling these, and extinguishing others of them that are unholy: Psalm lxxxi. 10, "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt:" "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Though thou canst not have in Christ the unworthy thing thy false heart desireth, thou shalt have in him what is a thousand times more desirable; and then the desire of that thing will die away. None complains of the want of candles while the sun shines into the room, for that more than supplies the want of them all; and none will cry, "Who will shew us any good?" when the Lord "lifts up upon them the light of his countenance." A child may be fond of his rattle, and will not part with it; but put a more pleasing thing in his hand, and he will immediately let it go: Matth. xiii. 44, "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hid in a field, the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."—Another may inquire,

(2.) What way shall I take to get Christ to fill my heart? The answer, in a word, is, Believe.—What shall we believe?

(1.) Believe that there is a complete fulness in Christ, sufficient to satisfy the boundless desires of your hearts: Col. ii. 19, "Hold-

ing the head, from which all the body by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." He is infinite in perfections; and whatever is desirable in all the creation, is eminently in him as the fountain of all.

(2.) Believe that he, with all his fulness, is offered to you, in the way of exchange with all your lusts and idols. Sincerely consent to the exchange. There is a full Christ before you; and the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, are with you. Give up with these, as expressly and solemnly as ye can, and take Christ in their room; believing there shall be no missing of them, and looking for the heart-satisfaction in him ye used to seek in them. And believe it is a bargain unalterable for eternity: Matth. xiii. 45, 46; Psalm lxxiii. 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.—God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever."

(3.) When your lusts come back, offering to entertain you as formerly, believe ye have in Christ what is a thousand times better: Psalm lxxxiv. 10, "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand." Say in your souls, as the olive, Jud. ix. 9, Shall I come down from bread, and lie down to eat husks? Shall I leave the milk and honey, and fill my mouth with gravel-stones? If the lust of vanity say, there is gaiety and finery, the eyes of beholders are fixed on thee; let the soul say, but I have in Christ a never-fading beauty, glorious robes of unspotted righteousness, Christ's love and his Father's, &c. that is solid and substantial, not to be exchanged for the airy nothings of the world's vanity. If the lust of covetousness say, there is a good prize to be had by a very little stretch, let the soul say, but I have riches in Christ, and that without any sting, durable riches and righteousness.

(3.) Another course of this walking is, men's touching but very lightly on religion in its turn, but digging deep in their lusts in their turn: Psalm lxxviii. 18, "And they tempted God in their heart, by asking meat for their lusts." Ver. 36, "Nevertheless, they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues." They are as it were in jest in the former, but in deep earnest in the latter; they swim like feathers in the waters of the sanctuary, but sink as lead in the mighty waters of their corrupt affections.

In this case, I propose this remedy:—Labour to be experimental Christians: Psalm xxxiv. 8, "O taste and see that the Lord is good." A taste of the transcendent goodness of God, the hidden excellency of religion, would hold you fast to the right side: John

iv. 10, "Jesus answered, and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." O then press eagerly into the inner court of religion; there are beauties there that will arrest your heart. Labour that you may have your hearts in every duty; break through the shell, till ye come to the kernel. Once make religion your business, it will soon fill your hands, as well as your hearts.—I shall only mention,

4. Another cause of this walking. They would fain be at heaven, but have no heart for the rugged way to it: Mark x. 21, "Then Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest; go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved; for he had great possessions." The sluggard loves the gold, but will not dig for it.

In this case the remedy is, to put on a resolution, a peremptory resolution for God, to cleave to him at any rate, and to pass through the wilderness to the heavenly Canaan, cost what it will: Numb. xiv. 24, "But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it." There ye may be, there ye must be, else you are ruined. And there are two things, as to which I would caution you.

(1.) Have you not got that victory over your idols you were expecting? Do not give over, but resolutely continue the struggle, looking to the Lord for strength to accomplish that in which you have engaged: Rom. xvi. 20, "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Have you come to Christ's door, though you apprehend you have got nothing yet? Be peremptorily resolved you will not go back to the door of your lusts, but hang on at his, though you should die at it, and you shall find, as in Cant. iii. 4, "It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth."

(2.) Have you got your feet on the necks of your idols? Pray, do not think the war is over, or that the Egyptian pursuers, who have been sometimes heavy on you, will be seen no more. No, no; the broken forces of corruption will rally again, and the newly-baffled idols will lift up their heads; therefore be on your watch, and prepare to renew the battle.

IV. I am now to make some improvement, which for the present shall only be in an use of exhortation.

Beware of wavering, and study to be stable Christians.—To enforce this, consider,

1. That stability is the ground of fruitfulness: Psalm i. 3, "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away." A tree, after being lifted, and planted sometimes here, sometimes there, cannot be fruitful: "The rolling stone gathers no fog." Unstable as water, can never prevail. Doubts, fears, and dryness in the soul's case, is a necessary consequence of unsettledness.—Consider,

2. That stability is the beginning of comfortable experiences in religion. We cannot think to thrive in a trade, till we settle to it. A fool is always beginning, leaves off, begins again, and so on; he never brings any thing to perfection.—Consider,

3. That stability is a fence against temptations. The wavering professor is a hopeful prey to temptation. The town that begins to parley, is next door to surrendering. The Jews saw Pilate begin to waver, and then they plied him to condemn Christ, till they carried him off his feet.—Consider,

Lastly, That stability is the foundation of serviceableness for God. The vessels of the temple were of gold, silver, brass, &c. but none of glass, no crystal ones; these were too brittle for temple-service. So wavering professors will never be honoured of God to be serviceable for him, but they will do much harm to the way of the Lord.

CREATION'S GROANS CONSIDERED AND IMPROVED.*

SERMON XXVI.

Rom. viii. 22,

For we know that the whole creation groaneth, and travelleth in pain together until now.

If we look abroad into the world, we cannot miss to perceive it in a feverish condition; the whole head sick, the whole heart faint; good men and God's good creatures also groaning under a weight of misery. If we look above us into heaven, we cannot but see that it is an holy God who has cast them into, and keeps them in this miserable condition. But withal we may conclude, that it shall not

* Delivered January, 1716.

be always so; this fever of the creation will have a cool. A gracious God will not suffer it always to be ill with good men and his good creatures. Therefore the apostle, ver. 18 of the chapter before us, taking a view of the suffering lot of the saints, of which himself had a large share, by faith looks through the cloud of miseries into which the saints are now wrapt up, and beholds a glory that is to be revealed in them, a lightsome day that shall succeed this dark night, when all the clouds shall be scattered, never more to gather. He confirms the revelation of that glory from two considerations. 1. The creatures, ver. 19, with earnest expectation wait for it. 2. The saints, ver. 23, anxiously look and long for it. And neither of these can be in vain, for they are of God's implanting; and justice stands not against the satisfying of these appetites raised by the sanctifying Spirit in the saints, and by the creating hand in the creatures.

As to the first of these, the apostle, 1. Asserts that longing of the creatures for the revelation of that glory in the saints, ver. 19. 2. He shews the misery they are under, from which they are so anxious to be delivered, vanity, ver. 20; corruption, ver. 21. 3. That their deliverance is connected with, and must be suspended till the revelation of that glory in the saints, ver. 21. 4. He shews how uneasy they are in the meantime, ver. 22.—Thus much for the connection.

In the words of the text, we have,

1. The party whose uneasiness is here taken notice of: "The whole creation," or every creature in heaven and on earth, is uneasy. Yet this phrase is not so universal, but that it admits of some exceptions, as Mark xvi. 15, "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;" yet not to the angels, glorified saints, devils, &c. The limitation is every creature made for the use of man, in heaven or on earth, which, because of their relation to him, were made subject to vanity on occasion of his sin. This shews a good reason for that phrase, Mark xvi. 15, "Preach the gospel to *every creature*;" that is, the gospel, which is gospel or good tidings to every creature; for not only man, but the creatures that were sunk in misery with him, shall have the advantage of it. As they smarted by the first Adam's sinning, they shall be restored by virtue of the second Adam's suffering. Acts iii. 21, "Whom the heavens must receive, until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." So here are to be excepted,

(1.) The angels, for as they were not made for man, so they are already perfectly happy, as the courtiers of the great King, who stand before the throne continually, as is signified by that phrase, Matth. xviii. 10, "That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven."

(2.) The devils. For though they be most uneasy, and carry their hell about with them, 2 Pet. ii. 4, "For God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;" yet as they were not made for man, so man did not make them miserable, but they made man so. Besides, the creature here was subjected in hope, ver. 20; but the case of devils is absolutely hopeless; for them there is no Saviour, and to them there is no promise.

(3.) Men themselves. For as, 1 Cor. xv. 27, "But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest, that He is excepted who did put all things under him;" so when it is said, "the whole creation groaneth," &c. it is manifest he is excepted, who was the cause of the groaning of them all. The reprobate, some of them are in hell already, others are posting on, both groaning, but in vastly different degrees. Yet they are not meant here, for their groans shall never have an end. But all the effects of the curse that are to be found in the universe this day, shall with them be swept out of the world into the lake at the great day, there to be settled on them as their proper base: Rev. xx. 14, "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death."

(4.) The elect. Some of them are in heaven, and groan no more. The unconverted elect groan under outward miseries; but they are not meant here, for, being immersed in wickedness with the rest of the world, they are far from the earnest expectation which the creatures here have, ver. 19. Believers groan most sensibly, but they must also be excepted here, as being opposed to this creation or creature. Ver. 23, "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

Now, these being excepted, it remains, that by the whole creation we understand all the rest of the creatures made at first for the use of man. They are all uneasy. The visible heavens were made the roof of his house, the earth his floor; the sun, moon, and stars, were made to be his lights, the air to breathe in, the wind to refresh him; the various produce of the earth to afford him necessaries, conveniences, and delights. He was lord of sea and land. Fishes, fowls, and beasts of the earth, were all at his command. While he stood, they were all of them most easy in his service. But now that matters are reversed with him, their situation is also reversed; none of them failed to share in his misery. For though vanity, corruption, and misery, first sprang up in the man, they did not halt there, but spread over the face of the whole earth, diffused themselves over the

brinish waters of the sea, and ascended through the air to the very glorious lights in heaven.—In the words of the text we have,

2. The agony that the whole creation or creatures are in,—a great agony. It is expressed two ways, both metaphorical.

(1.) They groan. This is a metaphor, taken from a man, with a heavy burden on his back, which so straitens him, that he cannot freely draw his breath; and when he gets it, it is a groan. So there is a heavy weight lying on the whole creation, that makes it groan; or, in other words, creatures got their death-wounds that day Adam got his, and so they are groaning still with the groans of a deadly wounded man. His sin stung them to the heart, and so they groan. The weight they are lying under is the weight of the curse, which binds vanity and corruption on them by virtue of the sin of man: Gen. iii. 17, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake." A weight under which, though stupid impenitent man groans not to God, yet his very beasts, and the very earth on which he walks, do.

(2.) They "travail in pain." A metaphor taken from a woman bringing forth a child. The pains of child-birth are exquisite pains, and put the patient both to groans and strong cries. And into this condition is the whole creation brought by man's sin. They are in pangs, and they cry out of their pangs. But though birth-pains are sore pains, yet they are hopeful. There is thus some hope that the creature will be delivered. They are travailing in pain with the hinds, to cast out their sorrows, Job xxxix. 3. They have conceived vanity and misery, and they have gone long with it, and they are travailing in pain to be delivered of the unhappy birth. They groan and also they travail. One that has too heavy a burden on his back, groans continually while it is on. But blessed be the holy and wise God, that has made the pains of travail intermitting; now and then a shower. So the creatures have their ordinary pains that are never off them. But sometimes, as at this day, they have extraordinary, and as it were travailing-pains, which will off again, though they will return: Joel i. 18, "How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture: yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate."—In our text we have,

3. The mournful concert they make: they groan together and travail together. Not together with us, ver. 23, but together among themselves. Before sin entered into the world, they all looked blythe, and as it were sung together: but now they have changed their tune, and groan together. The beasts and the fowls groan from the earth, and the very heavens echo back to them the same strain. So many creatures as there are, so many groaners, each of them with their mournful note.—We have,

4. How long they have sung to the melancholy tune: "Until now." They began at Adam's fall, and they have groaned ever since, and travailed on till the apostles' days, but they had not done with it then. Nay, they have groaned and travailed till now in our days, long five thousand seven hundred years, and yet their burden is not off their backs, nor have they yet got their sorrows cast out. And how long it may be to their delivery, we know not. But one thing we know, it will never be till the world end by the general conflagration, when the new heavens and the new earth may rise, like the phœnix, out of their own ashes.—We have,

Lastly, The auditory that listens to the mournful concert: *We*, "We know," &c. "We believers, we serious Christians, hear and certainly know the mournful ditty." Can the shepherd who is sent to notice the sheep, not observe when they make their moan for lack of their food, especially when the whole flock is crying together? Were all the men of a city groaning of their wounds, and all the women travailing in pains together, that person must be deaf that would not hear the sound, and he must have an heart of adamant that would not be affected. But the whole creation, above us and about us, are groaning and travailing together, and that for our sakes; yet a sinful generation has no ears to hear, no heart to be affected with it, and with sin which is the cause. But serious Christians, awake to it, cannot miss to hear, and their ears affect their hearts. You will observe, that they hear it distinctly, not confusedly, as we apprehend sometimes we hear a thing, which we are not sure whether it be a real voice, or only an illusion of the fancy. We know, says the apostle, we are sure, it is no fancy. Some creatures have a voice that every body can hear. But there is no creature so mute, but a serious Christian, whose senses are exercised, can discern its voice. David could hear the silent heavens, day and night, and also know their meaning, Psalm xix. 1, 2; and verse 3, "There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard." O that we could hear their voice this day! and that their groans and cries might pierce our hearts for sin.

This subject is highly important.—There is contained in it the three following doctrines, which in their order we propose to consider.

Doct. I. That the whole creation, made for the use of man, groans under the sin of man.

Doct. II. That the creatures' pains, under the sin of man, are travailing pains, sore indeed, but hopeful, they will in due season be delivered from them.

Doct. III. That the whole creation makes a mournful concert in the ears of serious Christians, by their groans under man's sin.

We begin with

Doct. I. That the whole creation made for the use of man, groaneth under the sin of man.

What is to be offered on this doctrine shall be comprehended under the three following heads of discourse.

I. In what respects the creation, or creatures are said to groan; for many of them, as the earth, &c. are properly incapable of groaning.

II. What distresses the creatures so much, that they groan? What has man's sin done to them, to make them groan under it?

III. How, and by what right, can the harmless creatures be made to groan for our sake? They have not sinned. True, these poor sheep what have they done?

IV. I shall add a practical improvement of the subject.

I am, then, to shew in what respects the creation, or the creatures are said to groan, for many of them, as the earth, &c. are properly incapable of groaning.—Here I observe,

1. That the sensible part of the creation really groans, each after its kind: Joel i. 18, "How do the beasts groan? the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate." The beasts, the birds, all that can groan, do groan. And these may be admitted as the mouth of the rest; they groan out their own misery, and the misery of their mate-fellows, that are in the same condemnation with them, while they stand about, as it were, looking on, like a company of foreigners, one of whom only being capable of speaking our language, speaks for the rest.

2. The whole creation appears in a mournful mood and groaning posture. The sun, the eye of the world, has often a veil drawn over it for many days; and he with the rest of the lights of heaven are covered with blackness, like mourners. The earth, trees and plants upon it, lay aside their ornaments, and every head among them is bald; because man, whom they were appointed to serve, is slain by the great murderer, the devil; therefore all his servants are gone into mourning.

3. The whole creation, if they could, would groan, for they have good reason, as we will see afterwards. As our Lord says, Luke x. 40, "If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." The pressure they are under would make them groan, if they had sense or reason to understand it. It is God's goodness to man that his sense of hearing is not more quick than it is, otherwise he could never have rest, there being always some noise

in the world. And it is well for man that the creatures cannot represent their misery as it deserves, otherwise they would deafen him with their complaints, and make him continually uneasy with their groans.

4. The Spirit of God is grieved, and groaneth (so to speak) in the creatures. God is every where present, quickening, influencing, preserving, and governing all the creatures, according to their several natures: Acts xvii. 25, "Seeing he giveth to all, life, and breath, and all things:" Heb. i. 3, "Upholding all things by the word of his power." The sun cannot shine without him; nor the earth produce its fruits, nor its fruits be serviceable to man, without him. Whatever is profitable or pleasant in the creatures, is but some drops of the divine goodness distilled into them, for his glory and man's good, Hence it is evident, that the abuse done to the creatures riseth to God himself. As if a mother having suitably sweetened the meat to a child, he should, after all, throw it away, his doing so is a wrong to her as well as the abused creature. Therefore, the abusing of God's works is forbidden in the third commandment, under the notion of taking God's name in vain. For the creature's goodness is in effect God's goodness: "For there is none good but one, that is, God," Matth. xix. 17. And therefore (with reverence be it spoken) God groans from the creatures against sinners: Amos ii. 13, "Behold, (says God), I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves." And as the Lord from heaven cried to Saul, Acts ix. 4, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" so, if men had ears, to hear, the drunkard, for instance, might hear God, from the creature, saying, "Man, why abusest thou me?" &c.

Lastly, Serious Christians groan in behalf of the creatures. Man was made to be the mouth of the creatures, to speak out what they could not: for which cause God gave him a tongue and speech, therefore called his glory. When sin entered, man's mouth was closed in that respect. When grace comes into the soul, the Lord says, "Ephphatha," that is, "be opened," Mark vii. 34. So man becomes the mouth of the creation again, Psalm xix. 1. Thus believers, seeing the reason the creatures have to groan, groan out their case for them, acknowledging, before God and the world, the misery and hard case they are brought into by man's sin.

II. We come now to inquire, what distresses the creatures so much, that they groan? What has man's sin done to them, to make them groan under it?

Why, truly, they got a large share of the curse to bear for man's sake: Gen. iii. 17, "Cursed," said God to Adam, "is the ground

for thy sake." The curse coming upon man is also felt upon the earth. Wherefore, but because of its relation to man? It bears him, and feeds him. And if so, that curse would spread to the visible heavens that cover him, and afford him light, and that nourish the earth which nourishes him. If this be not enough, remember they are all to go to the fire together at length; and surely that makes it. So thus man's sin, as brimstone, is scattered on his habitation: 2 Pet. iii. 10, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat: the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up." Verse 11, "Seeing then, all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness?"

This curse has subjected the creature to vanity. It has squeezed much of the fat out of it that was put into it at the creation; and from a full ear has brought it to an empty husk. And it is thereby also in bondage to corruption. It is made a stage of sin, a scene of misery, and liable to destruction as such. But to come to particulars.

1. The whole creation, by man's sin, has fallen far short of its beneficial and nutritive quality, in comparison of what it originally was at its creation. Man has not that benefit of the creatures for which they were appointed at first. While he stood, such sap and nourishment was in them, that could have afforded him all things for necessity, convenience, and delight, without toil. But sin gave them such a shock, that much of that sap is shaken out of them, and so man must now wring hard to get but a very little nourishment from them. This makes so much barrenness in the earth, which so meanly rewards all the toil of the husbandman. It brings forth thorns and thistles plentifully, under the influence of that curse, while it makes a very sober increase otherwise. And what is the procuring cause of all this but sin? Psalm cvii. 34, "He turneth a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein." We see how it is bound up, that the beasts of the field cannot get their food. And if the influences of the heavens were not restrained, it would not be so; the earth would not be iron, if the heavens were not brass. Under this vanity the whole creation groaneth.

2. The whole creation, by man's sin, has come far short of its ultimate end, the honour and glory of God. God's revenue of glory from the creature is mightily diminished by the sin of man. The whole creation was made to be a book, wherein men might read the

name of God; a stringed instrument, by which men were to praise him; a looking-glass, in which to behold his glory. But, alas! sin has drawn a veil over our eyes. Men may say they are unlearned, and cannot read more than what may make them inexcusable: "For the invisible things of God, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse," Rom. i. 20. The book is as it were sealed. They have lost the art of praising; hence the instrument is hung by, being to little purpose in the possession of such persons. They care not for beholding his glory, therefore the looking-glass is overlooked, and very little use is made of it. Under this vanity they groan also.

3. The nature of the whole creation is in some sort altered. When God looked on his creatures, he saw that they were very good, Gen. i. 31. And that is a sad alteration that makes them groan. Sin has cast the whole creation into a feverish disorder. There is an evil which accompanies them now, that they long to be rid of. Man complains and groans under the evil of the creatures, and they complain and groan under him. The transgression of man is heavy on the earth, and the case of the earth bound up from his service is heavy upon him. Where is the creature that has no evil about it now? The sun sometimes scorches man, and burns up the fruits of the ground; at other times his absence makes the earth as iron, that he cannot stand before the cold. The air often sickens and kills him. The distempered winds often sink him in the sea, out of the earth, where he is to get his meat, sometimes he meets with poisonous herbs. What is the cause of all this? Impute it not to the creatures as they came from the creating hand of God, but to the fall of man, whom nothing could have hurt, had he stood in his integrity.

4. The creature has fallen into the hands of God's enemies, and is forced to serve them. When man stood, all the creatures were at his beck, and were ready to come to him at his call. But when he left God, all the creatures would have left him, the sun would have shined no more on him, the air would have refused his breathing in it, the earth would not have fed nor carried him more, if God had not subjected them anew to him; Rom. viii. 20, "For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope." We see how far some of them have gone in renouncing their service to him, Job xxxix. 7, 8.. And ver. 9, "Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib?" And they would all have left their service, as a faithful servant will leave his master, when he goes out in rebellion against

his sovereign, but that they were forced to go along; and therefore they groan.

5. They are used by sinners to ends for which God never made them. They suffer violence, they are abused, and therefore they groan. God made them for his honour, men abuse them to his dishonour. Never did a beast speak but once, Balaam's ass, Num. xxii. 28, 30, and that was a complaint on man for abusing it to an end for which God never made it. The dumb ass rebuked the madness of the prophet, that would have it to carry him in a way God forbade him to go, and where the angel stood to oppose him. And, could the creature speak to us, we would hear many complaints that way. God gave the creatures to be servants to man, but man has sold them for slaves to his lusts; and who would not groan to be so maltreated? There are two things which make hard service:—

(1.) Labour in vain, continual toil, and yet no profit by it. The creatures have no intermission in their service: Eccl. i. 5, 8, "All things are full of labour." But O, where is the profit of it all? The sun riseth, and runs his race every day, and never resteth. But what is the issue? If it were to let men see to read God's word, to behold and admire his works, to perform acts of piety, to accomplish substantial good, all the toil would never be grudged by the creatures. But, alas! here is the case, for the most part men see to sin more by it, the worldling, the drunkard, &c. to pursue their lusts by it. The night waits on in its turn, and the thief, the adulterer, and the like, get their lusts fulfilled with it. The air waits about us continually, and the swearer gets sworn by it, the liar lied by it, and the like. The earth and sea wait on us with their produce; and people get their sensuality, their vanity, pride, and the like, nourished by it. What wonder they groan, to be brought to this pass? Sun, moon, air, earth, and sea, are groaning for this as they can. If our very meat and drink could groan, they would groan in the dish, cup, throat, and belly of the drunkard, glutton, sensualist, yea, of every one with whom they are not employed to nourish the body for the Lord and his service, but for the world, &c.—There is,

(2.) Hard labour, and much loss by it. We have both these: Hab. ii. 13, "Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts, that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?" The creatures not only toil for vanity, but as it were in the fire, where they smart for their pains. The covetous oppressor's money kept from the labourer, groans in the corner of your chest, and cries, "Behold the hire of the labourers which have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth,

and the cries of them that have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth," James v. 4. "Why do ye lock me up here, where a heavy curse lies upon me? why wilt thou not let me away to the labourer?" The oppressor builds his house by blood and oppression, and the very stones and timber cry out, "Why have ye laid me here, where the curse of God will not let me rest?" Hab. ii. 11. If a master should force his servant into the king's throne, and force the crown on his head, and the sceptre into his hand, how would he groan to think that he is abused, and that his life must go for it too. Ah! is it any wonder that the beasts, the pastures of the wilderness, groan this day, who have so often been set in God's throne, the heart; have had room with him, yea, more room than him, nay, many times the only room there? O! would they not cry, if they could speak, "Why get we the first thoughts in the morning, and the last at night? Why set you that love, joy, delight, and trust in us, that you ought to place in God? O let us out of this dangerous place, let us out of your hearts, that is a dangerous place to us," Ezek. xxiv. 25, 26.—I only add as a

6. And last reason of their groaning, that the creatures partake with man in his miseries.—Though they do not sin with him, yet they suffer with him. They that have life, live groaning with him. They are liable to sickness, pains, and sores, as well as he; for not a few of the troops of diseases billeted on man, were quartered also on them. Sinful man's neighbourhood infected them; they die groaning with him. In the deluge they perished with him, except a few preserved in the ark, as living in the same element with him. The beasts in Sodom were destroyed with fire and brimstone, with the men. In the plagues of Egypt, the cattle smarted together with the owners, also their fields, vines, sycamores, &c. The inanimate creatures suffer with him also. He sins, and the very earth is laid in bonds for him; but groan as it will in that case, he cannot loose them: Job xxxviii. 31, "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?" Their iron bands he cannot break: Deut. xxviii. 23, "And the heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron." The very waters are straitly bound up on his account: Job xxxvii. 10, "By the breath of God frost is given; and the breadth of the waters is straitened." Nay, they are muffled up with a weight above them, like a stone under ground; for as swift as they rise to go, and as nimble as they run, they are catched and held fast, like a wild beast, in God's trap. This is the true sense of Job, in the Hebrew, chap. xxxviii. 30, "The waters are hid as with a stone, and the face of the deep is frozen." Nay, the very heavens are in bonds too,

Deut. xxviii. 23. And they cry out in their bands, Hos. ii. 21, "I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth."

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.*

SERMON XXVII.

Rom. viii. 22,

For we know that the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now.

Having considered in what respects the creation, or creatures, are said to groan, and what distresses the creatures so much that they groan, we now proceed to inquire,

III. How, and by what right, can the harmless creatures be made to groan for our sakes? They have not sinned. True, these poor sheep, what have they done?—Here I observe,

1. That there is sovereignty in this groaning. The creatures are all his own, and it is lawful for him to do with his own what he will, Matth. xx. 15. Solomon tells us, Eccl. viii. 4, "Where the word of a king is, there is power, (Heb. dominion), and who may say unto him, What doest thou?" God is the great store-master, to whom all the flocks and herds in the world belong: "The cattle upon a thousand hills are his," Psalm l. 10. He has given you the use of them, but has reserved the absolute property to himself. You have them in kain, and that is ill paid; therefore no wonder he take them out of your hand, and dispose of them in another way whereby he may get the use of them, that is, glory to himself.—I observe,

2. That the creatures are liable to this groaning, because of their relation to sinful man, who has a subordinate, limited, providential interest in them; and that by the same justice that the whole which a malefactor has, smarts with him; as it was in the case of Achan, and all that he had, Josh. vii. 24. The sun is a light to him, therefore it is overclouded; it nourishes his ground, therefore its in-

* This sermon was delivered on a fast-day, appointed by the presbytery of which the author was a member, on occasion of a severe threatening storm which then prevailed.—In this discourse, and through the whole of this subject, the author has evidently a reference to the unnatural rebellion which was then raging, and appears deeply affected with the state of the church and nation at that period.

fluences are restrained. The ground feeds his flocks and herds, therefore it is inhabited. They furnish him with necessaries, conveniencies, and profits, therefore they suffer. They stand in a nearer relation to him than other creatures; they were made the same day, and of the same earth, and live in the same element with him, and therefore they smart sorest, because they are nearest to him. They are nearer, and therefore it is harder with them than with fishes and fowls, which were of the water, and live, the one in the water, the other in the air.—I observe,

3. That the creatures groan because of their usefulness to him, by the same right that, in war, one takes from his enemy whatever may be of use to that enemy in the war. None scruple to take every thing from an enemy, that so he may be disabled, and yield. Now, God is angry, and carrying on a war with us, which we began; and to oblige us to yield, he falls on the creatures that are useful to us. Pharaoh will not let Israel go, and the cattle, and the very trees and water of Egypt, smart. They kill, swear, lie, steal, commit adultery: Hos. iv. 3, "Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away." Men are very indifferent about the interest of God, and if they get their own interest seen to, are little concerned as to any thing else; and therefore God blasts their prospects; as you may see, by consulting Haggai i. 4—11.—I observe,

4. That the creatures groan, by the same right one takes a sword from a man wherewith he is running at him. The creatures are idols of jealousy often to provoke God, and therefore he strikes them down. Often, and most justly, does God punish sinners in that wherein they have sinned, so as they may read their sin in their punishment, as in Eli's case, and in Isaac's, Gen. xxv. 28, and xxvi. 35. The farm, and the care about it, often keeps people from the marriage-supper of the King's Son, Matth. xxii. 5. The Gadarenes, for their liking of swine better than a Saviour, had their wretched idols drowned in the sea.—I observe,

5. That the creatures groan by the same right one takes back his loan, when he gets no thanks for it, but, on the contrary, it is improved against himself: Hos. ii. 8, 9, "For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal. Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness." Alas! though we are always in God's common, for every

thing we have, we are not thankful, we do not remember our holding, but sacrifice to our own net. And God's favours with respect to the creatures, though they make people more wealthy, they make them not more holy.

Lastly, I observe, that the creatures groan by the same right a prince levies a fine on a man, when he might take his life. It is a mercy God deals not with ourselves, as with the creatures for our sake: Lam. iii. 22, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." True, men feel the stroke; and good reason, for God makes the creatures groan for that very end, that we may feel it. But we feel only at the second hand, though it is we only that are guilty. The bands lying on the earth might have lain on us, and we pinched as sore for our food as the beasts of the field for theirs; that as our flocks are forced to go to another part of the country, leaving our own hills desolate, so our houses might have been desolate, families scattered, and sent through the country begging bread. They have had more than any of us, who yet have been brought to such trying circumstances.—It only remains,

IV. That we make some improvement of this doctrine.

1. In an use of information. Let us notice this scripture fulfilled in our days, in this day, and that in a remarkable manner. There is a mournful concert which the creatures have been making in our ears now for many weeks together, for which we are this day called to fast and humble ourselves.—Hear the groans of the creatures:

(1.) The earth is groaning under us, Deut. xxviii. 23, "And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron." God has laid a weight on it, and bound it so strait, that it can get no breathing, there is no perspiration; it can get up nothing. It is run together as lead does after it is melted; Job xxxviii. 38, "When the dust groweth into hardness, and the clods cleave fast together." Hebrew, "God has pitched it up, or pitched it all over with frost, as one would do a vessel to keep in the liquor, when they have in view to prevent others drawing from it."

(2.) The waters groan, for there is a weight on them: Job xxxviii. 30, "The waters are hid as with a stone, and the face of the deep is frozen." Men's sins have taken hold of them, and turned them into dry land: Psalm cvii. 33, "He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the water-springs into dry ground." Ver. 34, "A fruitful field into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein." We have bridges of God's making, but these are no more signs of God's favour, than the turning of sea into dry land was to Pharaoh, for it proved his destruction.

(3.) The wild beasts of the field groan for lack of food. They that take the range of the mountains for pasture, are forced into the valleys, and this strait brings them near the dwellings of men, which otherwise they would shun, Hos. iv. 3.

(4.) The fowls of the air groan, and are hard put to it, to make shift for their lives, and they mourn after their kind, for the hand of God is heavy upon them: Hos. iv. 3, "Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish; with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea shall be taken away."

(5.) The flocks groan, for God has locked up their pasture: Joel i. 18, "How do the beasts groan? the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate." They are—fruitful creatures, but God threatens to pluck up the tree with its fruit;—harmless, yet they sadly suffer for the sins of men, their owners;—useful creatures, and because of their singular usefulness, a singular weight of the stroke lies on them. They cannot help themselves, and men cannot help them; so they groan and cry unto the Lord: Joel i. 20, "The beasts of the field cry also unto thee: for the rivers of water are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness."

(6.) The heavens groan, Dent. xxviii. 23, quoted already, for God has laid them under arrest. They have been long crying that their influences are bound up, but God has not yet heard them: Hos. ii. 21, "And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth." The machine of the world, in some sort, has long stood; because God has holden still the heavens, the main spring; but the heavens cannot help the earth, nor the earth the grass, nor the grass the beasts of the field, till God see meet.

2. We may learn, that when the whole creation groans for man's sake, it is no wonder God make man himself to groan heavily. It has been a groaning time through Scotland now for a long time, and these groans are not over yet. God grant they be not but beginning!

(1.) The nation is groaning under the weight of two armies, which, whether friends or foes, must needs be heavy to a poor land, that has enough ado to maintain itself. Besides, that as the world is now distempered by the corruptions of men, it is morally impossible but that violence, rapines, and other disorders, will fall out in such a case, which some heavily feel, however easy others may live, and that whether the armies be for or against us. It is groaning under a most causeless rebellion, raised by men of a perverse, malignant, Antichristian spirit, who, to get a limb of Antichrist on the throne,

and to ruin religion, have made all this disagreeable work. Hence the nation groans under a drawn sword, deeply bathed in blood, and thirsting for more. The blood of many has been shed in the field like water, many precious souls sent to eternity in a moment, in the hurry of war, and the carcases of men laid like dung in the open field; parents left childless, children fatherless, and their mothers widows, while the lives of many others are made to them more bitter than death. Into what a wretched case have many of the nobility and gentry of Scotland brought themselves! which, though it be the just judgment of God upon them, for which we are to praise him, yet it makes the nation groan, as the cutting off a gangrened member is painful to the whole body. Thus David lamented over Saul, 2 Sam. i. 17. The northern parts of the nation have been long groaning, who have had many months of that oppression, of which the southern parts have had but a few days, and yet made so great an outcry. Some groaning there, because their houses are made unpleasant to them; some, because they and their families are scattered; some groaning because they are harassed: others because they are solitary, &c.

(2.) The church is groaning for the weight of the Lord's anger gone out against her. Our mother is in mourning, and the gates of Zion lament. She groans under the weight of these mischievous decrees laid on in the latter end of the last reign, not yet removed, by which she is greatly oppressed,—under our own unchristian divisions, by which she is rent into many pieces;—under the just withdrawing of her Lord, by which she is become heartless. Many congregations of the land are groaning under the want of gospel-ordinances, the weight of silent Sabbaths. Her serious ministers and members are groaning, while they behold, on every hand, matter of lamentation and woe. Nay, she is groaning this day, to see the great red dragon standing before her to swallow her up. A limb of Antichrist set up for a king, to be a captain, to lead back the nation to Egypt, and to give the kingdom, if he had it at his will, to the Romish beast that supports the whore. Her members are in no good case to give a draught of their blood to the scarlet-coloured whore, and therefore in hazard to drink the cup of the wine of her fornication, if she had once access to put it to them.

Thus the church and nation are groaning together. No sort of persons, from the throne to the dunghill, are exempted. Our only rightful and lawful Sovereign, our Protestant King, whom God, by an admirable step of favourable providence, brought seasonably to the throne, groans for the unnatural rebellion raised against him. The nobles and gentry, who used to escape other strokes, smart un-

der the confusions in the land by that means. Ministers have a load of many weights to groan under this day; and to all the rest, not a few of them are threatened with suffering for a cause which their souls abhor as much as any in the nation. People of all sorts groan; the husbandman, because the earth, being as iron, will not allow his labouring; and the store masters, because of the particular distress of the beasts of the field.

3. This lets us see what is the cause of all this groaning. Is there not a cause? Yes; men's sins are the cause of all the distress on the creatures, and on themselves. We have procured all our miseries with our own hands. All ranks in the land have gone out of course, and therefore the very creation is put out of its course: Isa. xxiv. 20, "The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage, and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it, and it shall fall, and not rise again."—The Lord is contending with us,

(1.) Because that the sins of our fathers have not been sufficiently mourned over by the generation. National perjury and bloodshed are crying sins that are making the land to mourn this day. Without controversy, God is fulfilling that scripture in our eyes this day, Lev. xxvi. 25, "And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant; and when you are gathered together within your cities, I will send the pestilence among you, and ye shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy." God is making inquisition for the blood of the slain witnesses of Jesus; and it will be a wonder if, before the quarrel be ended, God make not the lives of hundreds of others go for one of theirs. I have sometimes thought, "O! why has God made choice of poor Scotland to be the field of blood? Are there not sins against God in the neighbouring land, as well as amongst us?" But I have been silenced by this consideration, Scotland was the place where the witnesses were slain, in a special manner, in the late times: "True and righteous are thy judgments, O Lord!"—The Lord is contending with us,

(2.) Because of the atheism and contempt of God in the land. Matters were come to that pass under the light of the gospel, that all religion was laughed at by many; so that there was a necessity that God, by some new argument, should prove the truth of his being, which he has already done, to the cost of many that were deeply engaged in these atheistical ways. May God bear it home on their consciences, that at least they may get their precious souls for a prey!—The Lord is contending,

(3.) Because of the horrid profanity of the generation: Hos. iv. i. —3, "Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel; for the

Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God, in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood. Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away." How many are there up and down the land, that glory in their shame, and take a pleasure to affront the God that made them by their profane courses. Can these things escape a mark of God's displeasure? It has broken in like a flood, and gone through the land; so that they are indeed but rare persons who have not entertained one branch or another of it; either they are swearers, or liars, or such like, and there is no reforming of them. The word cannot do it.—The Lord is contending,

(4.) Because of our abuse of mercies, and God's good creatures. We have had long peace, and God has wrought wonders for our deliverance. But we were surfeited with peace ere the war came. The good creatures of God prospering and thriving were but fuel to our lusts, and so snares to lead us away from God, that it is no wonder they get a stroke, like idols of jealousy, wherewith God has been provoked.—The Lord is contending,

(5.) Because of that woeful security and unconcernedness for the public cause of God and of religion which prevails. God is a jealous God, and when he is going out against a land, he calls all the inhabitants thereof to fear and to tremble; and he cannot endure indifference when his cause is at stake. This provokes him to blast people's private concerns: Haggai ii. 14—17, "Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation, before me, saith the Lord; and so is every work of their hands, and that which they offer there is unclean. And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the Lord. Since those days were, when one came to an heap of twenty measures, there were but ten: when one came to the pressfat, for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty. I smote you with blasting, and with mildew and hail, in all the labours of your hands, yet ye turned not to me, saith the Lord." This woeful selfishness has prevailed in an amazing manner among us. Little were we concerned with the distresses which many others of the nation were under; very indifferent were we as to what way public matters should go, as if we had been set here to be idle spectators of the reelings of the nation. But we see God has many arrows in his quiver, and will even have us to groan with the rest. And if people go lightly under the burden of the public,

he will give them a burden of their own to bear. God knows, your distress by this storm has lain near my heart, as I bear a part in all your afflictions; but seeing, with grief of heart, your prevailing temper to be such, that I could not call you together to wrestle for the public cause, I could not have confidence before the Lord to do it upon an inferior cause, though in itself a very weighty one.—The Lord is contending with us,

(6.) Because of the contempt of the gospel, and unfruitfulness under the means of grace. This makes a land to groan, and the creatures in it to bear a share.

4. Let the groans of the creatures stir us up to repenting groans before the Lord. Shall we be groaning under trouble, and the creatures groaning for our sakes, and yet not groan for sin, which is the cause of all? For the Lord's sake, sirs, be pliable to the word, and do not think yourselves above warnings, but receive convictions from the word, and be humbled under the hand of God, and take a look of your ways, and repent, and reform yourselves and your families. Wrath is gone out from the Lord against the land and us. Let us try to quench it ere it go farther, lest it break out like fire, that none can quench it. Let us be concerned for the public cause, and take a lift of Zion's burden this day. Be not indifferent in the cause of a Protestant king, and a Popish pretender. Ye have had fair warning to prepare to meet the Lord, and God followed the closing of our sermons on that subject hard at the heels with the stroke. And if this do us no good, take heed it come not next from the stall to the hall, and men and women be as sore straitened as the poor dumb creatures are this day.

5. Let us come here, and learn various other lessons. We know the book of the creation is an instructive book; every day we may have a lesson from them, from the highest, Psalm viii. 3, 4, to the lowest, Prov. vi. 6, 7, 8, namely, from the heavens to the ant. But in such a day as this we may learn more from them than ordinary; now they speak much and loud to us. God makes them groan thus for our instruction, as he cursed the fig-tree, for a lesson of faith to his disciples; and slew the cattle of Egypt, to make the owners see what they might expect. The creatures groan out these lessons to us:

(1.) That God is angry with us. He is angry with the land, has a controversy with our mother, and he is angry with the creatures, for they smart under it. We may say, as in Hab. iii. 8, "Was the Lord displeased against the rivers? was thine anger against the rivers? was thy wrath against the sea? that thou didst ride upon thine horses, and thy chariots of salvation." Sure if it is so, it is for

our sakes, and therefore he is angry much more with us. Look now through the whole creation, above, under, and about us, and we will see the characters of the Lord's anger. It is true, these things have natural causes, but God guides these. And this lesson we may take for a certain evidence of our sin; see sermon on Joel i. 18.—Another lesson is,

(2.) That it is not easy to get the flame of wrath quenched when once it is kindled. We may say this day, as in Psalm lxv. 5, "By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation." Men's sins may bring that on the creatures which they will not soon get removed. Learn here to beware of kindling the fire by provoking God! It is easier to keep the sword of vengeance in the sheath, than to get it sheathed again when once drawn. It is dangerous to depend on the praying for mercy on a death-bed, delaying all till then, for then wrath may be gone out, not to be quenched.

(3.) It is dangerous to be concerned with those with whom God hath a controversy: thus, all that belonged to Achan perished with him: Josh. vii. 24, 25, "And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan, the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had; and they brought them unto the valley of Achor. And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the Lord shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones." Had these oxen and asses been another's than Achan's, they had not perished in the manner they did. Thus the poor creatures lament their relation to sinful men; and many smart sore upon the occasion of the controversy God has with them with whom they are nearly connected. A companion of fools shall be destroyed. Even those God has a kindness for may smart full sorely for the sake of others; see 1 Kings xiv. 10—13. Another lesson is,

(4.) That sin is a heavy burden, which none are able to bear up under. O sirs! What think ye of sin, that makes the very earth to groan under it this day? Isa. xxiv. 20, "The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage, and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it, and it shall fall, and not rise again." Ye walk for the present full lightly under it, but the weight of it ere long, will be felt by the most stupid sinner; a dreadful weight! that makes the whole creation groan. Are not the bands of guilt strong and strait, that thus gird up the heaven and earth, and bind down the creatures, that they

cannot get up their head? It is an offence to an infinite God, no wonder it doth lay an infinite weight on the offender.—We are instructed,

(5.) That God is a jealous and just God, who will not suffer sin to go unpunished. Deceive not yourselves with misapprehensions of God, like the wicked, who, as in Psalm l. 21, think him altogether such an one as themselves; for as sweet as sin may be in the mouth, it will be bitter in the belly: Job xx. 12—14, "Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue; though he spare it, and forsake it not, but keep it still within his mouth:—Yet his meat in his bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps within him." Therefore, Exod. xxiii. 21, "Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions." He is true to his word, and it cannot fail. He will reverse the order of nature, turn the heavens to brass, and the earth to iron, rather than one word of his fall to the ground.—We may also learn,

(6.) That creatures are ever weak pillars to lean to. You have need of something else to bear your weight, the weight of your comfort, much more of your happiness, for they are not able. There is a vanity that they are under, by reason of which they cannot reach that end: Eccl. i. 2, "All is vanity." They that have not something else to lean to, may soon have nothing to look to at all. O what a pitiful idol is the clay god of this world!—We may farther learn,

(7.) That God is a sovereign King, against whom there is no rising up. How can sinners think to escape with their sins, when the whole creation smart for their sakes? Can we think that the innocent creatures should suffer, and we go free? Can there be an out-braving him, who makes the earth and heavens groan under his hand? or a fleeing from him, from whom the whole creation cannot make their escape?—We are instructed farther,

(8.) That the service of the creatures to sinful man is an imposition on them: Rom. viii. 20, "For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly." Man falling from God, lost the right he had to them. But yet they are kept in his service, which they grudge, and therefore they groan.—Hence it comes to pass, that these servants sometimes becoming masters, hurt him, and dispatch him. The least creature, having a commission for such a service, proves too hard for him, such as a stone in fruit, or a hair in milk.—I only add,

(9.) That the creatures are wearied of the world lying in wickedness, and would fain have it brought to an end: Rom. viii. 19, "For

the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." There is a happy day for the restitution of all things; they are longing for that day, when this world, that sink of sin, that stage of vanity, and scene of misery, shall be taken down; and the wicked shall have poured out upon them the deserved curse, with all its effects, centreing in themselves, without burdening others with it in any measure.—I come now,

2. To an use of exhortation. The groans of the creatures are exciting, stirring up groans. So many of them as are about us this day, so many preachers have we to provoke us to the duty we profess to be engaged in.—They cry to us,

(1.) Humble yourselves under the hand of God. He has laid them low, and shall not we lie low before him, since for our sake they are cast down. The noisy waters are now silent as a stone under his hand, the lofty mountains have laid aside their ornaments, and every thing mourns after its kind. Come down, then, from your pride and obstinacy; yield yourselves to the God that made you, lie low in the dust, and join issue with the rest of the creation. —They cry,

(2.) Repent, repent; for he is a God that will not be mocked, and though he long forbear, he will be avenged on impenitent sinners at last. He has been long pleading with us to let our sins go, and he is saying now, as to Pharaoh, Exod. ix. 2, 3, "For if you refuse to let them go, and wilt hold them still; behold the hand of the Lord is upon thy cattle which is in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep; there shall be a very grievous murrain." Harden not your hearts to keep fast the bane of strife betwixt God and you, lest it fare with you as it did with Pharaoh, on whose person God's hand fell heavy at last.—They cry,

(3.) Pray, pray. When the heathen mariners were at their prayers in a storm at sea, it was a shame for Jonah to be sleeping; Jon. i. 4. The creatures, as they can, are crying to the Lord; shall we be more brutish than they, and be silent at such a time? We have been praying in the congregation; it would be a promising thing, and no more but duty, if families and particular persons were fasting and praying: Zech. xii. 12, "And the land shall mourn, every family apart." There is much work in families otherwise, to take care of them. O! then, will you not do that which is so needful for yourselves and them?—I exhort you,

(4.) To reform, for the sake of these you would not involve in ruin with yourselves. For, Eccl. ix. 18, "Wisdom is better than weapons of war; but one sinner destroyeth much good." We see

how the poor creatures are ruined in this way. But it is not them only: Achan troubled the camp of Israel. God has threatened to pursue his quarrel to the third and fourth generations. If one in the family be seized with the plague, it is enough to carry away the whole.—Be exhorted,

(5.) To endeavour to reform others, for your own sakes. The fire in your neighbour's house may come to burn down yours, if you do not help to quench it. It is thought that Achan's sons perished with him, because they concealed and laboured not to put away their father's sin.

(6.) Seek to find your comfort and happiness only in the enjoyment of God and Christ. Then in the time of famine you may rejoice in the God of salvation, like the prophet Habakkuk, chap. iii. 17. It is a sad matter we should again be so ready to trust the deceiving world, and to lean again to that broken reed that hath so often failed us, and pierced through our hand. Seek it in God, where it can never fail, in the everlasting covenant, that will be a portion of which ye may always be sure.

(7.) Fear God, and stand in awe of him. As the sight of the drawn sword makes him in some measure afraid that wields it, so the sight of God's judgments should fill us with the dread of his majesty: Psalm cxix. 120, "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgment." When the sea was raging, and Jonah awakened, he was impressed with fear and reverence of him that made it, Jonah i. 9. God would have the hearts of people awed with his works; and it is contempt of God not to be so.

(8.) Labour to get a renewed right to the creatures. Our first charter was lost by Adam at his fall: and as the estates of rebels fall of course to the crown, so our right to the creatures was forfeited, and they fell back into the hands of him that gave them. We must get a new right through Jesus Christ, by faith in him, if ever we would have true comfort in the creatures. I own a wicked man has a sort of right to the creatures: Psalm cxv. 16, "The earth hath the Lord given to the sons of men." By the same law that God hath said, Thou shalt not kill, he has made them over to us. This is a providential right, but it is not a covenant-right. It is but like the right the forfeited condemned man has to his meat till the hour of his execution.

Lastly, Ye that are godly, I would beseech you to long for that blessed day for which the creatures are groaning. You have good reason, as well as they. Long for the day this stage shall be taken down, whereon so much sin and misery are acted, when all that Adam put wrong shall be completely righted by Jesus Christ.

CREATION'S TRAVAIL AND DELIVERY.

SERMON XXVIII.

Rom. viii. 22,

For we know that the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now.

Having, in the preceding discourses, considered the groans of the creatures under the sin of men, I now proceed to the illustration of

Doct. II. That the creatures' pains under the sin of man are travailing-pains, sore indeed, but hopeful, they will not last always, they will be delivered from them.

That this is the sense of this metaphor, appears by comparing ver. 23, "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

The creatures have now had a sharp shower for several weeks; blessed be the Lord it has in part intermitted, and that he has heard prayers in their behalf. Many such showers they have had since Adam's fall; and though they have an intermission of the exquisite pains, they are not well yet; the clouds will return after the rain. But the day will come when they will be quite well, and fairly delivered, and never groan more. What is clear from the scriptures in this point, I shall briefly lay before you, and a more curious inquiry is not fit for the pulpit.—With this view, I shall inquire,

I. When this delivery of the creatures is to come to pass.

II. What delivery shall they then get?

III. Confirm the doctrine of the creatures' delivery.—And then,

IV. Lead you to the practical improvement of the subject.—We are, then,

I. To inquire when this delivery of the creatures is to come to pass.

God, that has appointed a set time for every thing, has also appointed the precise time for the delivery of the groaning creation; and this is plainly revealed to be at the end of the world. For then is that time, Rom. viii. 19, 21: so Rev. xx. 11, "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled; and there was found no place for them." The apostle Peter is very express, that then they shall have their bearing shower, as it were, the sharpest ever they had, but it is the last.

2 Pet. iii. 10, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up." Ver. 13, "Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." They have been in their pangs ever since Adam fell, and will not be delivered till then. When that period shall be, I know not; but it is plain the world is come to its old age. The heaven and earth, that beautiful garment, is grown old, as the psalmist foretold long ago, Psalm cii. 6; therefore it cannot be very long ere it will be changed. She that hath had many children is waxed feeble; I mean our mother earth. It is evident she is not so fruitful as she was; neither do her fruits yield such nourishment as sometimes they did, they are both fewer and weaker; hence still less and weaker bodies. And why so with the earth, but because the heavens are in the same condition, and afford not such influences as formerly, in the vigour of their youth? It is observed by astronomers, that the sun shineth more dimly, and appeareth more seldom than before, being much nearer to the earth than in ancient times. So much the nearer, so much the less influence, as appears by comparing summer and winter, the midday and evening; so that the mighty giant, having so long run his race, begins also to wax feeble. It is long since our Lord said he would come quickly, Rev. xxii. 20. And most of the prophecies of the holy scripture are already fulfilled. All the seals are opened. Six of the trumpets are already blown. In the time of the seventh, the mystery of God is to be finished, and the world to end, Rev. x. 7. And there is no doubt but it is long since it began to sound. Under this trumpet are contained seven vials; and if these were poured out, then time is no more. There seems to be two of these vials past, and that we are now under the third, expecting the fourth. So that there will be but four of them to come. And it is very agreeable to the dispensations of providence, that the nearer the end, the motion will be the quicker; as in the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah, before their respective captivites, 2 Kings xv. 16, and 23, and downwards. Thus, without dipping further, it is evident we are far advanced in the last times, and that the world is in its old, if not decrepit age; and at the end is the delivery.*—We now proceed,

II. To inquire what delivery the creation shall then get. The

* The author has, in this part of his manuscript, several notes in short hand, which the transcriber could not decipher, from the want of which this part of the subject is not so complete.

creature conceived vanity and misery from the time of Adam's sin, then they shall be delivered of that burden, with which they have been so long big, Rom. viii. 20, 21. Now, according to what I before said on the first general head, we may soberly explain here,

1. They shall fully answer their end, I mean not the very end for which they were created at first, for some of these are inconsistent with the state of glorified saints: 1 Cor vi. 13, "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats, but God shall destroy both it and them." But whatever is their end, they shall fully answer that, God shall have his glory by them; and if he design any benefit to man by them, they shall not be plagued by vanity therein, Rom. viii. 20; 2 Pet iii. 13.

2. They shall be freed from all that evil that cleaves to their nature now by reason of man's sin. For now they have undergone a sad alteration, but then they shall undergo another. They shall be changed: Psalm cii. 26, "They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed." And that it shall be to the better, is evident from Rev. xxi. 1, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea."

3. They shall no more be abused by sinners; they shall never more serve the lust of any man whatsoever, Rom. viii. 21. They shall then be recovered, the groaning creature rescued, never to suffer a relapse any more. However the lusts of the wicked may then be, they must prey upon their own bowels, but they shall get no more of the creation to feed them.

4. They shall serve God's enemies no longer. Their long captivity shall then be at an end; Rom. viii. 21. The sun shall no more bestow one beam of its light on an ungodly wretch, nor shall the face of the earth bear him any longer. One drop of water to cool the tongue, shall no more be at his service. Then they shall bid an eternal farewell to the masters they served so long against their will.

5. All their misery, which was brought on them by man's sin, shall then be at an end. They have shared long with man in his plagues, but then they will get the burden off their back, Rom. viii. 21. The eating of the forbidden fruit cast them into a fever, they have groaned under it ever since; but then they shall get a cool, and never relapse more. Now as to the way this shall be brought to pass, the scriptures are clear in two things:—

(1.) That the world shall go all up in flames at the last day, which we call the general conflagration: 2 Pet. iii. 7, "But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store,

reserved until fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men." The apostle is very particular on this, in the 10th verse: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth, also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up." The visible heavens by these means shall pass away with a great noise. What a fearful noise would there be in a burning palace! what a noise, then, must there be arising from a dissolving world! the elements of air, water, and earth, shall be melted down like metal by the fire; the habitable earth shall be burnt up, with the works therein; men's works, cottages, palaces, castles, towns, and cities; God's works, all the creatures therein, birds, beasts, plants, trees, silver, gold, coin, &c.

(2.) That upon the back of this conflagration, there shall be new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, as in 2 Pet. iii. 13. This John sees, Rev. xxi. 1. To this purpose the psalmist speaks, telling us that the heavens and the earth shall be changed, which is quite another thing than to be annihilated. So the apostle Peter calls it only dissolution, 2 Pet. iii. 11. And to this agrees what he says of melting by fire, which, we know, does not annihilate, but only purges the metal from dross.

So far the scripture clearly goes. But what particular creatures shall be renewed in the new earth, their actions, properties, and uses, I will not inquire into these things. It is certain that some creatures came in after sin. Anah found mules in the wilderness, as he fed the asses of Zibeon his father, Gen. xxxvi. 24. The day will discover these things. But when one considers the world was made to be a looking-glass, wherein to behold God's glorious perfections: and that ever since it was made, it has been before sinful man, blinded with sin, except the short time Adam stood, it may occasion some thoughts as to what the state of matters shall be in a new heaven, and in a new earth.—We come now,

III. To confirm the doctrine of the creatures' delivery.—As to this,

1. Consider, that the great day is the day of the restitution of all things: Acts iii. 21, "Whom the heaven must retain, until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets, since the world began." When God made the world, there was nothing but harmony and orderliness in it. But as ever a rude heedless person, by a rash touch of his hand, defaced a fine picture, or disjointed and unframed a curious piece of work; so did Adam's sin the world. But there is a restoration coming.—Consider,

2. That our Lord Jesus is the heir of all things, Heb. i. 2. God gave Adam a charter, to hold of him the great estate of the world. But, rebelling against his God, his estate was forfeited, and that charter-right void, because it depended on his good behaviour. The second Adam coming in his room, the forfeited estate is made over to him, Psalm viii. 5, 6, 7, compared with Heb. ii. 6, 7, 8, "But now we see not yet all things put under him." Ver. 9, "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." But still in some sense he has not yet the actual possession of all, there are many of them still in the hands of his enemies, Heb. ii. 8. As Jesus Christ has a right to all the elect, though some of them are yet under the power of sin and Satan, and all of them, except a few singular persons, under the power of death, but Christ at that day will fully recover them all; so the creatures yet in the hand of his enemies, he will then restore, seeing they are all his by his Father's gift; hence we are taught that he will come again out of heaven for that restoration: Acts iii. 21.—Consider,

3. That all the effects of the curse are to be gathered together, and confined for ever with the wicked in the lake: Rev. xx. 14, 15, "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire." Now, they lie scattered up and down through the whole creation, but they shall all meet together there; and therefore it evidently follows, that as to the creatures, their share of them, which makes them groan now, shall then be taken off them, and they for ever made free. As the mud and filthiness that lies in every part of the street being swept together, and cast into the common sink, it is all there then, and in no place else.—It remains,

IV. That we make some improvement.

1. In an use of information.

(1.) This teaches us that every wicked man shall at length get all his own burden to bear himself alone. Many one takes a light lift of the burden of sin, because there are so many to bear a share of it. Men provoke God, and God smites the earth that bears them with a curse, makes their poor beasts groan, &c. But these strokes are far from their hearts; they notwithstanding keep their sins. If they groan at one time, they will recover again. But remember, O impenitent sinner! the day is coming when the creature shall escape, and leave thee in the lurch for all. The whole weight that is on them and thee together now, shall lie on thyself alone, and press

thee down through eternity, while not one of the creatures shall touch it with the least of their fingers.—Learn,

(2.) That people had need to take heed how they use the creatures while they have them. For as much as they are under our feet now, their ears are not nailed to our door-posts to be our slaves for ever. The day of their freedom is approaching. Let us not abuse them to the service of our lusts, lest they witness against us at last. Let us not dishonour their Lord by them, lest they rejoice over us for ever in our misery, when their foot is out of the snare, and ours in it. Let us not put them in God's room, lest they send all the effects of the curse from off themselves on us, and so put us in the same place with devils.—We may hence see,

(3.) That this world, and what is therein, passeth away: 1 John ii. 17, "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof." It is a stage of vanity that will be taken down, and the table of a dying life will come to an end. What marvel is it that man dies, seeing he lives by deaths, the death of the creatures; but this bondage of the creatures will not continue, they will be delivered, and God will support the life of man another way in eternity.

(4.) We may learn what glorious things will be the new heaven and the new earth! When the old cracked pewter vessel is melted down and refined, and cast into a new mould, how unlike will it be to what it was! The heavens and earth are now very glorious, yet sin has marred them. He that made them is not pleased with them, and therefore will have them cast over again. If they be so glorious, even while so far unmade by sin, how great must their glory be when they are again new made!—We learn,

(5.) However large a share the wicked may have here, they will have neither part nor lot in them. For "in the new heavens and new earth dwelleth righteousness," 2 Pet. iii. 13. For the wicked to be there, would be inconsistent with the creatures. But as for the saints, they have a charter, making over the earth to be theirs; which, seeing it is not fully put into their possession now, it must be in the other world: Matth. v. 5, "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." But how and in what sense they shall possess it, I am not here to inquire.

2. From this subject we have afforded an use of terror to the wicked. How dreadful shall their case be at the end of the world! Come, O impenitent sinner! behold here, as in a glass, the misery that is abiding thee. Thou canst make a shift now for thy ease, but what wilt thou do then? It is terrible news to thee, that the creature shall be delivered.—For,

(1.) The misery that lies this day on any creature whatever for

thy sake, shall be taken off it, and laid on thee thyself; and when all is laid on thee, thy burden will be insupportable. There is a curse on thee already, as a transgressor of the law, Gal. iii. 10. But a heavy end of the curse lies on the creatures for thy sake: Gen. iii. 17, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake, in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life." There is no way to extinguish the curse but by faith in Christ's blood, which thou slightest. Therefore, seeing there must be a removal of it from the creatures, it must needs be turned over on thee, and with thee turned out of the world: Matth. xxv. 41, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Compare Rev. xiv. 10, "Thou shalt also drink of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation, and thou shalt be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." And wilt thou not then cry out with Cain, "My punishment is greater than I can bear?" Gen. iv. 13.

(2.) As thou wilt be deserted of God, so thou wilt be deserted of the creatures in thy misery. No help from heaven, none from earth: Isa. viii. 21, 22, "And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry: And it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king, and their God, and look upward. And they shall look unto the earth, and behold, trouble and darkness, dimness and anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness." When thine enemy falls upon thee, all thy friends will run away from thee. There are two ways by which the ungodly get ease in the world, which will both fail them here.

(1.) Though they have no comfort or satisfaction in God, they can take it in the creature. Though they see no beauty in Christ, they see a great deal in the world. Though the marriage-supper of the King's Son be to them a light matter, yet the farm and the merchandise are not so; Matth. xxii. 4—7. Though they have no heart for the bargain of the everlasting covenant, Prov. xvii. 16, yet they are easy when they can win a few pence or pounds. Though the promises of things unseen are to them hungry things, empty shadows, yet what they can see with their eyes, and get a hold of with their hands, are substantial: Hos. xiii. 6, "According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted, therefore have they forgotten me." Though the man cannot lie on his right side, he can lie full well on his left; though not on his back, looking up to heaven, yet on his face, looking down to the earth. But, ah! sirs, this trade of yours will not last; you will not shift long this way; the creature will be delivered, and what wilt

thou do then? Thou wilt not have a whole side to turn thee to then; thou shalt have as little comfort in the creature then as in God, and that is none at all. He that has but one pillar to lean to, had need to have it a durable one. But thou hast but one, and it cannot last.

(2.) If they cannot find it in one creature, they take it in another. If Haman cannot have the comfort of Mordecai's bowing, he can take it in revenge. If there be not sap enough in one creature, he can go to another, and so make shift. But this trade will not last either. For the whole creation shall be delivered; and if all must go, there will be nothing left thee to ease thee in thy misery. Was not Job in a heavy case, when he was full of sores, his whole body over, and all his friends deserted him? Job. xix. 13—19. But what was all this to what shall be thy case for ever? If you call to the sun that serves you now, it will not bestow one single gleam of light upon you;—to the waters, they will not afford thee one drop to cool thy tongue;—to all that ever thou possessed upon the earth, it will not do thee the least service. For then their term is out, and they will leave thee for ever.—How heavy will all this be!

1*st*, To be thus left by all thy gods that had most of thy heart when thy days of strength were. O faithless world! is this thy kindness to thy friends? Is this the reward of the precious heart and affections, time and soul, spent on thee? Must they that loved it best, have least comfort of it one day? They whose hearts idolized it, be the only persons abandoned by it in misery? Yes, it must be so, and that justly. For it was no more pleasant to the creature to be set in God's room, than it was to a slave to be forced into the king's throne by his master.

2*dly*, To be concluded under such misery, when the creature, thy servant and slave, which thou didst use and abuse according to thy will and lust, shall be set free. When the suffering of the creature by thy hands shall cease, then thy suffering shall begin. As the heavens abused by Antichrist are called, on the fall of his kingdom, to rejoice, Rev. xviii. 20; so the abused creatures will turn their groans into songs of triumph upon thy ruin. And to be insulted in misery by any, is sad: but saddest of all to be insulted by those that sometime were our slaves.—This subject may be improved,

3. In an use of comfort to the serious and godly, who notice the groans of the creatures under sin, and join their own groanings with theirs. This cloud that has so black and lowering a side to others, has a fair, white, lightsome side to you.—The creatures shall be delivered.

(1.) The mournful spectacle of the creatures which you see to-day,

if that day were come, ye shall see no more for ever. You not long ago saw the heaven as brass, and the earth as iron, and you heard an extraordinary groaning among the creatures. But their groans are not gone, though become lower; as yet the sun must serve to let wicked men see to dishonour God; the earth and sea must afford God's good creatures to be fuel to men's lusts. Many a good creature must lose its life, to preserve the lives of them who live but to dishonour God; and every creature, meat, drink, and the like, is abused, and groans under the abuse. Well, the day is coming, when they will groan no more; nor shall you need to groan for them. The travailing creation will cast out its sorrows.

(2.) If that day were come, ye shall also be delivered. You shall groan no more under your own burdens. This is the time of your travail, then ye shall be well: John xvi. 20, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." Ver. 22, "And now ye therefore have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice: and your joy no man taketh from you." May we not argue here as our Lord doth? If God so clothe the grass, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, will he not much more clothe us? And as the apostle, "Doth God take care for oxen, to deliver them, and will he not take care for us?" If God deliver the old groaning creature, will he not deliver the new creature, that is also groaning? Yea, surely you shall be delivered,—delivered from sin, the body of sin, you now groan under; the cords of guilt shall be broken in pieces; the iron bands of sin's tyrannical power shall be burst asunder; the old tenant, that has sit long against your will, shall be cast out, never to set his foot in again: 1 John iii. 2, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God: and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Your candle shall not burn dim any more, nor your fire be weakly. In the garden, now so much overgrown, there shall not be one weed, nay, nor the least seed of one left: "The Egyptians, whom ye see to-day, ye shall see no more for ever." Ye shall be delivered from all the consequences of sin. Though you are at present recovering of the deadly disease, yet the effects of it hang about you; miseries on your soul, body, character, and the like; but then all of these shall take wing, never to return. No more complaints of a weak and crazy body; no more reproaches, crosses, and losses; no more temptations, for when the carcase is removed, why should the eagles gather together? The last enemy, death, shall be destroyed, 1 Cor. xv. 53. Ye shall have a perfect delivery.

There are four words Christ spoke of, or to Lazarus, at raising him from the dead. These he speaks for the elect.

The first word is, "Where have ye laid him?" John xi. 34. The old murderer took away the elect's life among the rest, and every elect soul he has naturally buried in trespasses and sins. But our Lord, coming to seek what was lost, sends the gospel to the elect; and though the party himself cannot discern the gospel-language, yet others do discern it, and hear Christ in the gospel saying of the elect soul, "Where have ye laid him?"

The second word is, "Take ye away the stone," ver. 39. This is spoken for the work of conviction. Though the dead soul cannot hear it, it is heard: "My Spirit," says he, "let him alone no more; conscience, awaken and rouse him up; law, take him by the throat; off with his ignorance of God, of sin, and of himself; break his security, throw by his self-conceit and fig-leave coverings: "Take ye away the stone."

The third word is, "Lazarus, come forth!" ver. 43. This is spoken for the work of conversion. It carries life along with it, the soul hears this voice, and lives. Then the Spirit of Christ enters into the soul, and he that was dead in sin lives to God, and is coming forth in the progress of sanctification. But, O how slowly does he come forth! For though the reigning power of death be broken, yet the grave-clothes are still about him, which entangle him. Though he can move both hands and feet, which he could not do before, yet there are bands on them both. This is all that is heard in time. But good news to the groaning Christian: at the last day, ye shall hear the last word, which is the

Fourth, "Loose him, and let him go," ver. 44. Then not only sin, but all the consequences of it, shall be taken off. No more sin, pain, death, sorrow, or any such thing. Then comes the glorious liberty of the sons of God, which Christ has purchased, which God has promised, which the whole creation is earnestly expecting, and which the spiritual Christian is groaning and waiting for, Rom. viii. 21, 23.—I come now to a

4. And last use, of exhortation as to these things.

(1.) Let us believe, and give God the glory due to his name. Man is changeable, and he that depends upon his promise may soon find that he trusts to a broken reed. But not so with God's promises: Psalm lvi. 10, "In God will I praise his word: in the Lord will I praise his word." Abraham had a promise of a very unlikely thing; he believed the promise, and it was accomplished, Rom. iv. 17—21. Is it unlikely that the creature shall be delivered? Yet God has said it; believe, and give him the glory of his power, that will

perform this great thing. Should all the angels and men in the universe conspire to free the groaning creation, they could not effect it. It is long since they were nonplussed in the case of refreshing the weary earth with a shower of rain: Jer. xiv. 20, "Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers?" Nay, men conspire to hold down, to abuse the creatures, and keep the hold they have got of them. And the earth is made a field of blood for the mastery over them. But God will end the quarrel, and deliver the creature out of wicked hands. The second Adam is as able to restore, as the first was to break in pieces. Give him the glory of his goodness, that will not allow it always to go ill with the good. God's good creatures suffer for man's sake: but a good God will not suffer it always to be so. How much more will he provide, that piety shall not always be ashamed, and wickedness triumph! The day will come, when none will be high but they that are holy. Give him the glory of being mindful of his promise, and stedfast to his word. It is more than five thousand years since he subjected the creature to vanity in hope; and so, to this day, they not only groan, but they travail, in the hope of delivery; and their hope shall not make them ashamed. O that it could make us ashamed of our hope wearing out so soon under afflictions! to whom a few years, months, days, nay, even hours, are sufficient many times to make us hopeless.

(2.) Let us believe this delivery, and walk answerable to the faith of it: 2 Pet. iii. 11, "Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation and godliness!"

[1.] Let us use the creatures as servants, not as slaves; allowing them a regard suitable to their natures and use. God has given the creatures into our hands, and they must endure much misery for our profit; and even that may be humbling to us, as being the consequence of sin. But that ever God allowed man to make a sport of the proper effects of sin, to torment and put to pain any creature, merely for his pleasure, is what I do not believe. And therefore grave divines do condemn cock-fighting, and such like, as unlawful recreations; and I think not without good ground. Sure I am, Solomon says, "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast; but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel," Prov. xii. 10. And to whom can the needless torment of the poor creatures create pleasure, but to the cruel or unthinking?

[2.] Let us labour to use the creatures soberly, and in the fear of God, and not abuse them to the service of our lusts. God allows us them for our necessity, convenience, and delight, in sobriety, but

not to be fuel to our lusts. Let us use them so as we would wish to have done in the day when we will see them delivered; that is, use them to the honour of God.

[3.] Let us never build our nest in that tree at the root of which the axe is lying. The creature is passing, lay not the weight of your portion upon it. Ye cannot abide with this world; and if ye could, it will not abide with you. He is a fool, though he act the part of a king on a stage, who looks not for a portion that will be more abiding. For where is he when the stage is taken down?

[4.] Look for your portion in another world, where is an enduring substance: Matth. vi. 19, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:" Verse 20, "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." This world is no continuing city; look out for one that is to come. That is life, which begins after death is subdued, and when men shall die no more. To be easy here is no great matter, but to be so then is what should be our chief concern.

[5.] Be holy in all manner of conversation, 2 Pet. iii. 11. This is the time of God's forbearance, wherein many confusions are suffered in the world: the holy and unholy are mixed: the effects of sin lie on God's good creatures, as well as sinners: but this will draw to an end, and there will be a fair separation. It concerns you now to see on what side you shall be set, to distinguish yourselves by holiness now, from those you would be distinguished from by happiness hereafter.

(3.) And last place. Believe thy delivery, and help it forwards with your prayers. Cry for the great deliverance, the restitution of all things. It is one of six petitions our Lord has put into our mouths, "Thy kingdom come;" and the last in the book of God is, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus," Rev. xxii. 20. I would have you to consider,

[1.] That the churches are all groaning together this day; some of them under temporal plagues, being raised by Antichrist; all of them under spiritual plagues, a fearful decay of power and purity among them, whereby the disease is become general. The concern for the Protestant interest is very little at the hearts of some Protestant states. But a due concern for the Protestant religion, the promoting truth and holiness, by a thorough reformation, appears to be very little at the hearts of any of them: Isa. lxiii. 5, "And I looked, and there was none to help: and I wondered that there was

none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me, and my fury it upheld me."

[2.] That the wheels of providence seem to be running speedily forward to great changes in the world. God is shaking the nations, and things appear as in Luke xxi. 10, 11, "Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines and pestilences; and fearful sights, and great signs shall there be from heaven." And who knows what shall be the issue? But we may be sure that the mystery of God is carrying on by them, and a way making towards it being finished.

Let us then, by our prayers, help on the deliverance of the creation, from sin and its consequences, by crying mightily to the Lord, that these glorious things which are spoken of the city of God in the latter days may be fulfilled, and so the end may come.—I now proceed to

DOCT. III. That the whole creation makes a mournful concert in the ears of serious Christians, by their groans under man's sin.—Or,

That how deaf soever others be to the groans of the creature under man's sin, serious Christians will not be so, they will be affected with them.—In speaking to this, I shall be very short.

I shall only, in a few words,

I. Mention the reasons why they so affect serious Christians.

II. Make some improvement.

I. I am to mention the reasons why they so affect serious Christians.—Among others, there are the following:—

1. They are the undoubted mark of man's fall and apostacy from God, which cannot fail to affect a serious heart. Sin has marred the beauty of the creation; and though blackness is no deformity among blackamores, yet it is so amongst the whites. Some glory in their shame, but they will not do so to whom sin has been truly shameful. Now, these groans are the memorials of the fall.

2. They are the constant evidences of God's indignation against, and hatred of sin, which are never wanting in the world. And it is a child-like disposition to be affected with the tokens of their father's anger; though they who have no care to please God, can easily pass the signs of God's displeasure, others cannot.

3. They bring their own sins to remembrance: and a tender conscience disposes persons to think, "This is for my sake, for my provocations, that they suffer." And so the saints groan with the groaning creatures, and long for the common deliverance.

4. God is dishonoured by the sinner's abuse of the creatures. This

makes both the creature and true Christians to groan, to see God's good creatures abused, to the dishonour of their Creator.

II. I am now to make some improvement; and all I propose here, is an exhortation—not to be deaf to the groans of the creation under man's sin, but to be suitably affected with them. God has not only made them groan with their ordinary, but with an extraordinary groan; and if you do not from hence see what an ill thing sin is, what a just God the Lord is, and how severely he punishes, and so set forwards to reformation of life, you may assure yourselves you will see these things more to your cost, when you yourselves shall be made to groan under the heavy hand of the Lord.

Alas! for the security and impenitency of Scotland; nothing of all we have yet met with will rouse us out of it. Take heed that God do not create a new thing amongst us, which whoso shall hear of, their ears shall tingle, and thus groans of another sort from houses and fields shall be heard.

O that we were showing ourselves serious Christians, by our being deeply affected by the groans of the creation under sin! If we were so, we would be,

(1.) Groaning under a sense of our own sin, and the sins of the land: mourning for the dishonour done to God by ourselves and others, by which we have grieved the Spirit of God, and burdened the very earth that bears us.

(2.) We would be weaned from, and in a holy manner wearying of the world, which is a compound of sin, misery, and vanity.

Lastly, We would be longing for the glorious day of the great change abiding the world, when our Lord's kingdom shall be fully come,—the mystery of God finished,—sin and misery swept out of the world,—and the saints and the creatures perfectly delivered. Amen.

FAITHFULNESS TOWARDS GOD EXEMPLIFIED AND REWARDED.*

SERMON XXIX.

NUMB. xiv. 24,

But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went, and his seed shall possess it.

THE Lord being provoked with the murmuring of the people, in consequence of the ill report of the land brought by the spies, though he

* Delivered after the dispensation of the Lord's supper, July, 1712.

did not destroy the people all at once; yet, justly displeased, he threatened to cut off the whole generation of murmurers, so that not one of them should come to Canaan. His anger at the rebels, however, did not make him forget his faithful servant Caleb, who had acted a totally different part from the rest of the spies, together with Joshua, who is not named here, because now he was not numbered with the people, being for the present the attendant of Moses, and afterwards his successor, as captain to lead the children of Israel into Canaan. This intimates to us, that God's own people may get special intimations of his love in a time when God is angry with the generation. However great the darkness may be, some select ones will always have a Goshen, a land of light to dwell in. Joys may be their portion, while God is distributing sorrows to others.

There were twelve spies, all of them noblemen or gentlemen, heads of the children of Israel, Num. xiii. 3. There were two, and but two of them, faithful to God and their country. Ten of them brought up an ill report of the land, dishonoured God, and ruined both their countrymen and themselves. They that are false to God, will never be true friends to their country. Hence we see, though not many noble are called, yet some are. Greatness and goodness met in Caleb.—Goodness, that he would not desert the cause of God, notwithstanding of all the ill company with which he was associated. They have little religion, that will not endure the shock of ill company, be they never so great.—In the text there is,

1. Caleb's character.—More generally, God owned him as his servant. This honour God put upon him. It is an honour to the greatest to be God's servants; though the greater part will rather be the devil's slaves, and count that their honour. But blackness is beauty among black men.—More particularly, Caleb was a man of a truly gallant and generous spirit. His name signifies all heart, and his disposition corresponded with his name. He had another spirit than that of the world, another than his own, another than the rest of the spies. He possessed a spirit from heaven, calculated for the work to which he was appointed; and that Spirit inspired him with courage, with undaunted resolution, while the rest were misled by a base, mean, sneaking spirit. He was truly courageous in his actions; his other spirit made him behave himself otherwise than the rest. He followed the Lord fully; he walked with the Lord, kept close by his duty, in opposition to all difficulties and discouragements. He was not afraid of the Anakims, nor did his undaunted heart shrink at the sight of their high walls. He knew that towns, walls, armies, and giants, must fall before the

Lord, when his promise was engaged for it. His companions deserted and contradicted him in his good report. The people threatened him with stoning, but he was all heart, would not yield, but followed the Lord fully. (Hebrew, fulfilled after the Lord.) Whatever way the Lord led, he followed.—In the text there is,

2. The gracious recompense which God promised to his steadiness and faithfulness; that is, the possession of that good land, while the carcases of the rest fell. Piety is the best policy. They who are careful of God's honour, he will see to their interest. Caleb was to fight for the land, but God says, I will bring him into it. The praise of the success of our endeavours is due to the Lord only; this promise secured his through-bearing over all difficulties.—From this subject, we may draw the following doctrines, which we shall attend to in their order, viz.

Doct. I. That the honest servants of Jesus Christ must distinguish themselves from others, by following the Lord fully.

Doct. II. That they who would follow the Lord fully must have another spirit, another than the spirit of the world, another than their own spirit naturally is.

Doct. III. That those who, by following the Lord fully in the time of great declining, distinguish themselves from others, God will distinguish them, by special marks of favour in a time of great calamity.—The scripture affords many instances in proof of this, as Noah, Lot, Jeremiah, &c.—We begin with

Doct. I. That the honest servants of Jesus Christ must distinguish themselves from others, by following the Lord fully.—For illustrating this doctrine, it is intended,

I. To shew what it is to follow the Lord fully.

II. To give the reasons of the point. And then,

III. To improve the subject.—We are then,

I. To shew what it is to follow the Lord fully.

1. It is to follow the Lord *only* as our great guide and leader: Heb. xii. 2, "Let us run the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." They that follow not the Lord only, do not follow him fully: Hos. x. 2, "Their heart is divided." Their heart was going, one part after the Lord, another after their idols. He must have the whole man. Now, this implies two things,

(1.) The soul's ceasing to follow all others who do not lead in subordination, but in contradiction to him. We have eaten our gospel-passover, and must now set forward on our journey. We stand as in a place where two ways meet, and at the entrance to

these ways there are false guides, who cry, Follow us; the Lord says, as in Song iv. 8, "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse." —We must not follow false guides.—We must not follow our own spirits: Prov. xxviii. 26, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." Most men's spirits are quite blind: "Ye were sometimes darkness," Eph. v. 8. The best of them are but in their spiritual childhood, not to be trusted to themselves, but standing in need of a governor. They are naturally biassed guides, having a bent the wrong way. There are many snares which our spirits perceive not, till they are caught in them as a bird; they often grasp delusions instead of light; and men's thoughts in religion, not regulated by the word, prove as false lights on the sea, that occasion the ship's dashing on a rock. Let us look above us, rather than within us, for our way.—Again, we must not follow our own lusts: Rom. viii. 1, "Who walk not after the flesh." Lusts are followed by many unto their own perdition; when they lead, the devil drives, because they lead the highway from God. Wind and tide from hell go with the stream of corrupt lusts, while the soul follows as an ox to the slaughter. Much of the spiritual warfare here lies in striving against this stream.—Neither must we follow the world; the world would have the leading of all, and it gets the leading of its own.—We must not follow the men of the world: 1 Cor. vii. 23, "Ye are bought with a price, be not ye the servants of men." No man must be followed farther than he follows Christ. The dictates and commandments of men, be they ever so great, are no rule for conscience and practice: "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." It was the sin of Ephraim, Hos. v. 11, that "he willingly walked after the commandment." They have little faith, or truth either, that will pin their faith to the sleeve of any.—Farther, Follow not the course and way of the world: Rom. xii. 2, "Be not conformed to the world." To be neighbour-like is not the plain way to heaven, but a plausible way to hell, for the most part of people's neighbours are going the broad way. There will none seek to heaven, but a peculiar people, a singular sort of persons, true separatists from the multitude, who must resolve to be men wondered at. They that will follow the multitude must perish with the multitude, and it will be cold comfort to us, that we go to hell with a company.—Finally, Follow not the smiles of the world. If we will follow the Lord fully, we must lift our process, and leave off to make our court to a bewitching world, which treats its followers like the false irregular lights that are sometimes seen in the night, which pleases the eye of the traveller, but lead him off his way into some quagmire,

obliging him to retire with shame and sorrow. How often does the world repay our love with frowns, and kills when it flatters.—This implies,

(2.) The soul's following the Lord in opposition to all these. The souls of men are ruined by an exchange of the living God for idols; Jer. ii. 13, "For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." And their salvation is begun by an exchange of idols for the true God. The devil, the world, and the flesh, make many offers; God makes one, "I will be thy God," which, in a day of power, downweighs all the offers of the world and of hell. Hence, when the man is brought to follow the Lord fully, then farewell all others, and the Lord is welcome for all. There the eye of the soul is fixed. You may take this in three things:—

[1.] The Lord points out to his people the place of eternal rest, a city where they may abide. This they follow after as their grand prospect in the world: Heb. xi. 14—16 "For they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned: but now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city." There they must be, there they are resolved to be, cost what it will: Matth. xi. 12, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Their great question is, "What shall we do to be saved?" While others are following what is about them, they follow what is above them for their happiness; they will not have their portion in this world, nor can such small things satisfy them. They are inspired with holy ambition to have a place among them that stand before the throne of God and the Lamb. Their other spirit so ennobles them, as that they cannot rest in these little views, which the serpent's seed have before their eyes. It is a holy flame which natively ascends, and carries the soul upward: Phil. iii. 20, "For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."

[2.] The Lord points out the way leading to eternal rest; and they following the Lord fully, their heart follows him, making choice of it. He points out Christ the personal way, John xiv. 6. Then the soul that was knocking at, and working to win in at Adam's bolted door, the covenant of works, gives it over, and comes in by the door of the sheep, renouncing the way of the law, that old dead, killing way, and choosing to enter by the new and living way

Heb. x. 20. The Lord points to the real way of holiness, Isa. xxxv. 8. That way they choose: Psalm cxix. 30, "I have chosen the way of truth." This is their choice, that they may not be either among the faithless workers, or the idle, indolent believers, neither of whom follow the Lord fully. True, it is a difficult way; both the way of believing, and the way of holiness, lie up-hill, but they halt no more. Their feet follow him, walking in it. He sets them to the strait gate, and they enter on the narrow way, and they walk in it. Better a narrow way to heaven, than a broad way to hell. Their choice is followed with action, their purposes issue in sincere endeavours, and their resolutions are crowned with practice: Psalm cxix. 106, "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments." Like Naphtali, they give goodly words, and, like Joseph, are as a fruitful bough.

[3.] The Lord goes before them, and they follow his steps. He is glorious in holiness, and their design is to be like him, holy as he is holy. They labour to imitate him in his imitable perfections. They are "followers of God, as dear children." There is a likeness betwixt a man and his God, and therefore the heathens, when they could not be like God in holiness, they made their gods like themselves in filthiness; and God, to shew men how they should walk, sent his own Son in manhood, both to die for sinners, and also to leave them an example, that men might see with their eyes how God walked, and so learn how he would have them to walk. Thus we must write after his copy, 1 John ii. 6, "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself so to walk, even as he walked." And no less pattern do they propose to themselves who follow the Lord fully.

2. To follow the Lord fully, is to follow him *universally:* Psalm cxix. 6, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments." Whosoever says he will come after me, they must follow me "in all things, in all times, in all places, with all their souls." No exceptions can be admitted in following the Lord: but as the resignation at first was absolute, if honest, so must the following be. This is to follow him fully, to fulfil all the will of God.—More particularly,

They that would follow the Lord fully, must follow the Spirit of the Lord, and not follow their own spirit. It is an ordinary character of a Christian in Paul's epistles, that he walks after the Spirit. It is the work of the Spirit to bring in light, to discover sin and duty; we must entertain it, and comply with it, we must answer the call: Psalm xxvii. 8, "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face, my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." To incline and fit the soul for following, we must beware of quenching the

Spirit, but rather, when the wind blows, spread out our sails, that they may be filled by it. We must be spiritual in our hearts, lips, and lives.

They must follow the word of the Lord, Psalm cxix. 30. The Lord's written word is the Christian's directory for heaven, the compass by which he is guided on the sea of this world, and by which he is to steer his course. It is the map of the country to which, and through which, he is travelling. Thence must he take his waymarks. What the Bible says, should seldom be out of the Christian's heart. Those who study the Bible, have the advantage above all others, they get their directors away to heaven with them. "It is written," will be enough to them that follow the Lord fully. They will make the word of the Lord overcome their prejudices. Isa. xi. 6, "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid: and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together: and a little child shall lead them."

They must follow the providential will of the Lord: "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." If we have said, I am the Lord's, then we must have said, Our will is the Lord's. It remains that our will should follow the Lord's, as the shadow doth the body. If it be God's will that we should be poor, sick, crossed, &c., that should also be our will; if not, we do not follow the Lord fully. It is a sad matter we should give up ourselves to be servants, and yet still aim at being masters, to cut and carve for ourselves. There will be a crook in every lot of ours under the sun. Eccl. i. 15, "That which is crooked cannot be made straight." That which is crooked, in respect of our will, is straight enough with God's, which is the true rule, so that if we follow the Lord fully, our will should be bended to the crook, and not the crook straightened to our will.

Again, we must follow the cause and interest of the Lord in the world. There is always war in the heaven of the church, between Michael and the dragon, though it does not always come to blood. The armies are always in the field, though they are not always actually engaged in a furious battle. Ye must be on the Lord's side, whether it be the highest, or the lowest in the world. There is no lying neutral here; if we be not for God and his cause, then we are against him. This is a day wherein the enemy has displayed his banners; and we also have a banner to be displayed because of truth: "Who is on the Lord's side?—Who?" It is time God's people were taking courage to them, and cleaving to the Lord, his way and work, in this covenanted land, in spite of all opposition.

In the next place, we must follow the ordinances and institutions of the Lord, that doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, which has the Lord's stamp on it, the preaching of his word, and the

sacraments, &c. It is lamentable to think how that spirit is gone, which some time ago was among people, for following the ordinances of the Lord. We are even glutted and surfeited with them. Opportunities of communion with God are undervalued. People will deprive themselves of them, from reasons which, if they were to lose a sixpence by, they would quickly come over. It was the commendation of the Levites, and godly people through the ten tribes in Jeroboam's time, that "they followed the ordinances of the Lord." All these came to Jerusalem, to sacrifice to the Lord God of their fathers.

We must also follow the worship of the Lord.—The secret worship of the Lord by ourselves alone: Matth. vi. 6, "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father, which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." Secret prayer is a duty which they who are exercised unto godliness cannot live without, a duty in which communion with God is as readily to be had as in any other: and though there may be prayers in your family, yet, if you know your duty, you will also pray in your closet.—Family prayer: "Pour out," says the prophet, "thy fury upon the heathen, and upon the families that call not upon thy name." What do prayerless families but expose themselves to the wrath of God? Every house should be a church. We receive family mercies, and are chargeable with many family sins; why not then family worship? And do they follow the Lord fully that have their family worship? They will worship God at night, but not in the morning. Complain not of want of time, others in your circumstances get time when they have a heart to it.—Next, internal worship, without which all your external worship will be to no purpose. There is no following of the Lord fully, if that be wanting: Phil. xiii. 3, "We are the circumcision, that worship God in the spirit;" that is, in the exercise of grace with external worship; fear, reverence, faith, hope, love, and other holy affections, which are the life and soul of worship.

Finally, they must follow the Lord so as that one thing be not wanting: Mark x. 21, "One thing thou lackest." There is one thing usually that is the great thing which stands betwixt every one and heaven: it is as it were the *Shibboleth* they cannot frame to pronounce. They can comply with any duty, part with every sin, bear any cross, but such a duty, such a sin, such a cross. And therein they say, as Naaman, 2 Kings v. 18, "In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant. When I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing." But this is not to follow the Lord fully. People must either come over that

also, or they cannot prove their sincerity. The only course to take here is that in Matth. v. 29, 30, "And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee, that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee." Herein lies the great evidence of sincerity; and the victory over predominant lusts is like that over the Anakims, which will cost many a severe struggle.

3. To follow the Lord fully, is to follow him uprightly. A hypocrite does but walk in a vain show. His feet only, not his heart, do follow the Lord. God, who is the maker and the searcher of the heart, will never reckon himself followed fully in a carcase of duties; but notices the manner, motive, principle, and end of actions, which, if they be not right, all is wrong.—Then, to follow the Lord fully, is to follow him honestly in respect of our principle, not with a carnal selfish principle, which can only set us agoing, but with a spiritual, principle; not as a mercenary soldier follows his captain, but as a child follows his father: John vi. 26, "Ye follow me," said Jesus, "not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." There is a selfish religion, where self is the chief wheel that sets all agoing.—We must follow him singly, in respect of our end; following the Lord with a design and desire to please him, and not for carnal selfish ends. What is not done for the Lord, as the chief end, he will never reward. Want of singleness in the end, maims the action: as when a wife adorns herself to please an adulterer, her aim would make her action abominable.—We must follow the Lord evangelically, in respect of the manner; following the Lord, leaning on his, and not on our own strength. This is the life of faith in obedience, by which the soul goes out of itself to the Lord for all strength, saying, as in Psalm lxxi. 16, "I will go in the strength of the Lord."

4. To follow the Lord fully, is to follow him constantly: John viii. 31, "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." It is a small matter to begin well, but it is the continuing to follow the Lord which is true following of him. It is a following the Lord *habitually* and *evenly*, so that our souls are fixed on this as their ordinary bend. It is not to take up our religion by fits and starts. We must delight ourselves in the Lord, and call always upon our God. This must be our daily business, not our by-hand work. It was the fault of Rehoboam, 2 Chron. xii. 14, "He did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord." And it is the fault of many, that they are unstable as water in matters of religion; many

people's religion is like a tree-leg, which they can lay by and put to as their convenience requires. We must follow the Lord, so as to end our journey without defection and apostacy: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." We must not follow the Lord as ordinary servants, who have their term day, at which they give up with their masters. But our course of obedience must have its perfect work; we must go through with the work of Christ to the end. Apostates are not fit for heaven: "No man," said Jesus, "having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven," Luke ix. 62. But fearful is their doom, if they apostatise: "If any man," says God, "draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him," Heb. x. 38.

Finally, it is to follow the Lord resolutely, as Ruth did Naomi, in opposition to all discouragements and impediments in the way. There is the river of the evil example of the world, but they must strive against the stream; there are corrupt strong lusts of the heart, but they must cut off right hands, and pluck out right eyes; and there is the cross that will be laid on their backs, which they must go through with, and not turn their backs on the Lord in a stormy day, but trample on all which they have in the world to follow the Lord. They must not be as those who go to sea for pleasure, but like hardy mariners, who ride out the storm.—We now proceed,

II. To give the reasons of the point.

Among others, we shall mention the following:—

1. Because the change made in regeneration is a real change though not perfect. Believers are God's "workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." The new creature, from the time of its birth, is perfect in its parts, though not in degrees. There is something awanting in every part of the new man, but no part is altogether awanting. Each gracious person has all the graces of the Spirit, though some of them are more eminent than the rest, and are as top-branches. This cannot but produce a following the Lord in a gospel sense.

2. In closing with Christ there is an universal resignation. They give themselves up wholly to the Lord. No exception can be made, but the most difficult duty is undertaken, the dearest lust is given up with. It remains that people's sincerity in closing with Christ be evidenced by their walk, in an unlimited respect to all his commandments, in following the Lord whithersoever he goes.

3. The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth, Eph. v. 9. When there is not something of all goodness, there the Spirit dwelleth not. Where the garden is only watered by man's hands, there some plants thrive, others go back for lack

of moisture; but where the shower comes from heaven, it brings all forward together. So where there is an artificial religion taken up by men, there may be some partial or external appearance of good fruits: but where the Spirit is at work in the soul, real goodness, and righteousness, and truth, will at once be brought forth in the life and practice.

4. True mortification is universal. Where death comes, it takes the life out of the whole body, the soul departs from every part. So, Gal. v. 24, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." Sin keeps its dominion by one lust, as well as by many: therefore where any lust remains unsubdued, there is no genuine mortification there. But where genuine mortification to sin is, the soul will follow the Lord fully.

5. Hypocrites may follow the Lord, but none can fully follow him, but those that are sincere. Judas may be in Christ's company, but the bag was always dearer to him than his master. Demas, because he loved the present world, apostatized; so that, unless we follow the Lord fully, we go not beyond the line of hypocrites.—I now go on,

III. To make some improvement.—And this,

1. In an use of warning.

This may serve to warn one and all of us, to take heed to our ways, and examine well our walk, whether we follow the Lord fully or not. Much depends upon it. None follow the Lord fully in a strict sense, while out of heaven, but all honest Christians follow him in a gospel sense. Therefore ye may well suspect your states, if you do not follow the Lord fully. This may strike a damp upon the spirits,

(1.) Of the more gross sort of professors, whose religion appears plainly to be but half religion, who, even in the externals of religion, take some parts, and leave others which they know to be duty; like these, Zeph. i. 5, "who worship the host of heaven upon the housetops, and that swear by the Lord, and that swear by Malcham;" that will sometimes be praying, and sometimes cursing, taking parts of religion only here and there.—It may strike a damp on the spirits,

(2.) Of the more cleanly sort of professors, who go a great length, only lack one thing. There is one thing that is the great makebate betwixt God and them; and they go through all the rest of religion, but there they are mired, there they stick. That is the great gulf fixed between heaven and them, through which they can by no means pass. But pass it we must, or we follow not the Lord fully. Some do not see it, then it is the more dangerous; but seen it must be, and also overcome, or men may bid farewell to heaven: Rev. iii. 21, "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne."—Here some may state an

OBJECTION, If following the Lord fully take in all these things, who does it? In ANSWER, These follow the Lord fully in a gospel sense, who,

(1.) Observe the Lord daily, and bear up after him in every step, yet, like the weak child following its mother, their eye follows him, their desire goes out after him, they would be at him, and with him, wherever he goes.—This implies two things.—(1.) Their observing all the prints of his feet, they love all his footsteps, they love all the duties of religion for his sake, and desire to perform all his commandments: Psalm cxix. 5, "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!" Their heart is in some measure reconciled to every known duty, and at variance with every known sin. The spirit is willing, though the flesh be weak. Some sins lie nearer their hearts than others; some are as right eyes, others only but as left toes; but O! a right eye plucked out is good in their sight, the contrary grace is beautiful and glorious, and the desire of their souls: Rom. vii. 12, "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good,"—(2.) Their observing himself as the centre of all their desires. All goodness, holiness, and perfection, centre in him. That which is scattered here and there in his word, ordinances, and people, they take a view of, as concentred in himself, and so see in him at one view the whole of what they should be; they are pleased with it, and sincerely desire to be like him.—These follow the Lord fully,

(2.) Who aim after the Lord fully; though they cannot follow him precisely in every point, they aim at, they endeavour it, as the child following its mother, weeping, and making what way it can after her. This implies two things.—(1.) They aim at the performance of all duties, and warring against every sin. They do not give goodly words, and so fold their hands together, wishing they were better; but they even put their hands to roll up the stone, which yet perhaps may come down and down, over and over again, upon them. They aim at being holy in all manner of conversation, 1 Pet. i. 15. Grace infuses a principle in the heart, that turns the man towards every thing to which God calls.—(2.) They aim at the all of every duty, to get it right as to the manner, as well as to the matter: Phil. iii. 3, "They worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."—I come now,

2. To an use of exhortation.

I exhort you to distinguish yourselves from others, by your following the Lord fully. Sirs! have ye a desire for heaven or not? If ye have no desire, you may sit still at ease, time will carry you down the stream to an eternity of woe! If ye have a desire for

heaven, then up, follow the Lord, follow him fully. Set your affections that way. You follow duties; that is not enough, follow the Lord in these fully, or you will never see heaven. I hope you are not for bidding farewell to, and taking your last sight of heaven. If then you be in earnest to get to heaven, set yourselves to follow the Lord fully. Before I press this upon you by motives, I exhort you to take a solemn, grave, and serious consideration of what is lacking in your conversation, that you may fill it up by following the Lord. We must see our defects before we can fill them up. To assist you in this, consider what is wanting,

(1.) In your mortification of sin, what right eye remains to be plucked out, lest there may be some one leak or other that may sink the ship: Psalm lxvi. 18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Self-love prevails much, and hence beloved lusts find harbour, and escape the axe.—Consider,

(2.) What is wanting as to your compliance with known duties, whether ye make conscience of all ye know or not. Do you find that you pray, but do not meditate nor examine yourselves? then fill up that want. Do you pray, but neglect to watch? then fill up this want also; and so on.—Consider,

(3.) What is wanting in the duties ye perform? For many times these are but the half of duties, the outward part only, wanting that faith, love, zeal, and liveliness, that should be in all our duties. —Consider,

(4.) What is wanting in your bearing the cross. Every one has his daily cross. Consider how ye bear it, with what meekness and patience ye walk under it.

(5.) Consider what is wanting in your graces, if you have any; and unto what you have you should be still adding: 2 Pet. i. 5, "Add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly love and charity."—Consider,

(6.) What is wanting in your relative conversation. A man is really what he is relatively. Consider how thou answerest the duties of a husband, wife, parent, child, master, or servant.—Having carefully observed all these wants and defects, be conscientious in filling them up; follow the Lord *only*, *universally*, *uprightly*, *constantly*, and *resolutely*. Follow him fully.—To constrain you to this, I would mention the following motives:—

1. All is full which is set before you in the way of following the Lord. God deals not by halves.

(1.) We have a full law for our rule to walk by: Psalm cxix. 96, "Thy commandment is exceeding broad." It is extended to all the

parts of our walk; it reaches heart, lip, and life; requires not only duty to be done, but done aright. And unless we have respect to all God's commandments, our obedience is not acceptable.

(2.) We have a full word for our light in our walk, by which we may take up what is sin, and what is duty, see how to steer our course in times of the greatest darkness: Psalm cxix. 105, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." It is the star that is given to guide us through this world, and we should be much conversant with it.

(3.) We have a full covenant for provision in our way. It is an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure," 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. Whatever be our case, there is suitable provision in the covenant for it. There are in it precious promises to the saints in all conditions of life. Whatever storms and tempests may blow in the world, the saints may find something in the covenant to shelter them.

(4.) We have a full Christ to lean to. He is mighty to save. In him there is both righteousness and strength.

(5.) There is a full weight of glory for reward; such as will fill soul and body even those of the most enlarged capacities. Shall we not then follow him fully?

2. The Lord Christ, our leader, did not do the work of our salvation by halves, but fully. He obeyed the law fully, none of its commandments wanted their full due of him. He suffered and paid the debt fully, its threats and curses fell on him in full measure. And what would have become of us, if Christ had halved the work of our salvation? Who would have done the rest? Who would have satisfied for any of our sins, or made up for any deficiencies in our services?

3. Our not following the Lord fully, makes the following him in any instance so difficult; and to follow him fully would be the high way to make religion easy. When the Christian has one foot fixed to the earth, it is no wonder than that he with difficulty mount upward. One lust unmortified is enough to mar all our duties, and make our progress in religion very irregular, and therefore difficult; whereas it would be a great ease if all came away together, Luke ix. 59.

4. If we do not follow him fully, we will lose the reward of following him at all, in respect of eternal salvation, 2 John 8. Look to yourselves, that we lose not these things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward: otherwise we will lose all the pains we have been at in religion. That in which we follow him not, will draw a black stroke through all in which we have followed him.

Lastly, Another motive is, if we follow him not fully, we will share with them that have not followed him at all, in a fulness of wrath: Psalm cxxv. 5, "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity." God will fill them with the wine of his wrath. He will "cut them in sunder, and appoint them their portion with unbelievers," Luke xii. 46, as those who divided themselves betwixt the Lord and their own lusts.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

SERMON XXX.

NUMB. xiv. 24,

But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereunto he went, and his seed shall possess it.

I NOW proceed to the consideration of

DOCT. II. That they who would follow the Lord fully, must have another spirit; another than the spirit of the world, another than their own spirit naturally is.

In attending to which, I shall,

I. Shortly point out, that it is another spirit.

II. Shew what that spirit is, which they who follow the Lord fully have, and must possess.—Illustrating, at the same time, the nature and necessity of such a spirit.

III. Make some practical improvement.

I. I am shortly to point out, that it is another spirit which such possess.

This other spirit, which is so necessary to following the Lord fully, is understood, either of the Holy Spirit of God, who dwells in all the saints, Rom. viii. 9, or rather of a spirit sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and raised above its natural spirit by the power of grace. Thus it seems here to be understood, though both amount to the same thing. Such a spirit may well be called another spirit. For,

1. It is another spirit than that which the world is possessed of, which is a mean and base spirit, influencing them to grovel on this earth. The world has what it calls a fine spirit. But even that does

but grasp at shadows, while the most excellent things are out of its view. But this is a spirit truly noble.

2. It is another spirit than the most refined hypocrites have. By the common operations of the Spirit, the spirit of hypocrites may be raised to act more nobly than before, but these change not the nature of a man's spirit, but only help it to act in a natural way to a better purpose; whereas this spirit raises it to gracious actings.

3. It is another spirit than what the saints had before they were sanctified. Another, not in substance, but in qualities. How does this other spirit make a man differ from himself? How doth it advance him to a higher sphere? It made a preaching Paul of a persecuting Saul. It endows a man with quite new principles, motions, ends, and aims, and elevates him to new measures for attaining the same.

II. I go on to show what that other spirit is which these who follow the Lord fully have and must possess.—Illustrating, at the same time, its nature and necessity.—This spirit is,

1. A noble elevated spirit, aiming at high things, and is not satisfied with these with which the common herd of mankind are satisfied. Thus Caleb aimed at Canaan, Numb. xiii. 30, while the rest were for Egypt again, chap. xiv. 4. Such another spirit have the saints, Phil. iii. 14, "They press forward toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Were a beggar's child adopted by a prince, he would change his spirit with his lot, and aim at things suitable to his new quality. Thus the children of God rise in their aims and designs, will not be content with the creatures, but with God himself; not with earth, but heaven, not the favour of men, but of God, not with gold, but grace; for they have another spirit, which can be content with nothing less. They have high projects, not bounded within the limits of this narrow world, but aiming at a greater conquest. Now, such a spirit they must have that would follow the Lord fully.—For, if less can satisfy, they will be content to take their portion on this side Jordan; they will exchange heaven for earth, and keep their grand prospect within the bounds of this world: Phil. iii. 19, "Their God is their belly, and they mind earthly things;" and so will never follow the Lord fully, nay, they will leave him where they cannot get their carnal interest along with them, as Demas did.—Again, if they have not such a spirit, they will continue creeping on the earth, to get their food, as the beasts among their feet, and never follow the Lord in the way to true happiness. They will fall down before these three that are in the world: "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," 1 John ii. 16. They will wrap themselves up in

the world's profits, or drench themselves in its pleasures, and, like beggars, take care of their cottages, having no eye to a palace. Finally, if they have not such a spirit, they will never use means and endeavours suitable to such high aims. Noble spirits will proportion their endeavours to their high designs, while the mean spirit will go heartlessly about them. Gold is not got, like stones, beside every brook; nor is grace and glory got, but in the way of hearty exertions: Prov. ii. 3—5, "Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding, if thou seekest for her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.

2. It is a spirit of faith, as the apostle speaks, 2 Cor. iv. 13, "We having the same spirit of faith." Such a spirit had Caleb, another than that of the rest, who could not enter because of unbelief. Such another spirit have the saints, while the rest of the world remain under the power of unbelief, and if they had it not, could never follow the Lord fully; for unbelief will soon trip up a man's heels in following the Lord: Heb. iii. 12, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." Now, Caleb's other spirit of faith thus discovered itself

(1.) It took part with the promise, and hung by it, while the unbelieving spirits of the rest sided with sense in opposition to it. Thus, while the unbelieving world, whatever they pretend, do never solidly venture their happiness on the promise, but seek it rather among those things which are the objects of sense—the saints have another spirit, which rejects these, and by faith rolls the weight of its eternal happiness on the promise; which spirit of faith realises to them the things which are not seen, Heb. xi. 1, affords a view of them, as matters of the greatest realities, and of the word of promise as sufficient security. Without this, none will ever follow the Lord fully;—for, if that which is held out in the promise be not realised unto men, it will never make sensible things, the reality of which men certainly know, to yield and give place to it; for men will not quit certainty for hope. Were men as much persuaded of the reality of the things contained in the promise, as they are of gold, and other metals in the earth, think ye they would slight the promise and take up with the objects of their senses as their happiness? No. The truth is, all the glorious promises are to the world but fair words about fancies.—Again, if men cannot trust the promise as sufficient security, they will never venture their all upon it, but our all must be ventured upon it if we follow the Lord fully: 2 Sam. xxiii. 5, "This is all my salvation, and all my desire." We must glorify him by faith, hanging by his bare word. All for

another world must be laid upon it, and often it comes to this, that all for this world must also be laid upon it.

(2.) This spirit of faith took up the land of promise, as a land well worth all the pains, toil, and hardships, which the conquering it would incur: Numb. xiv. 7, "It is an exceeding good land." Thus, while unbelievers cannot see heaven worth the pains and toil that must be at the work, like the false spies, chap. xiii. 32, "they bring up an evil report of it." But the saints have another spirit of faith, which makes them see the glory of that land to be such as to deserve their utmost efforts and endeavours. "Let us therefore labour," say they, Heb. iv. 11, "to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." Now, without such a spirit, men can never follow the Lord fully; because to work for nothing makes us extremely averse to engage. If the recompense of reward be not seen as sufficient to counterbalance all the pains, persons will never strive to enter into God's rest, nor take heaven by force, Heb. xi. 26. Whence do we see, that men will strain every nerve for a little of the world, which they think worth the pains, who will not bow a knee to God for heaven? They will work eagerly, who pray very heavily and carelessly, because they think the one worth their pains, the other not.—Again, men are naturally very averse to spiritual endeavours, and if they see not something that will provoke the sluggard to run, they will not follow the Lord fully. There must be a glory seen by an eye of faith, to overcome this aversion. Thus Christ proposed the treasure to the man, Mark x. 21, but he saw it not, therefore he went away.—Farther, no man can reach heaven with ease, the way to it lies up-hill. It will cost striving, wrestling, using violence, and the like. There are right eyes to be plucked out, that is hard; there are giant-like lusts to be mortified, who will adventure upon that? there is a combat, a fight to be maintained, in which the person must be a conqueror. Will ever men, then, follow the Lord fully, without such a spirit as by faith discerns heaven as worth all that pains? Most men see it not: they think less may serve, for they want that other spirit, which accounts nothing too much here; and so, with Judas, they say, Why all this waste?

(3.) This faith penetrates through all the difficulties which the unfaithful spies could not see through. Caleb's other spirit took the glass of the word of promise, and saw thereby how their numerous armies might be beaten, their high walls thrown down, the Anakims laid as low as ever they were high: Numb. xiv. 9, "Only rebel ye not against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land, for they are bread for us; their defence is departed from them, and

the Lord is with us; fear them not." Such another spirit have all the saints in a greater or less measure. The carnal professor, like the sluggard, cries, "There is a lion in the way, I shall be slain in the streets." There is no meddling with such a duty, no mortifying such a lust; thus he gives over the attempt. But the saints have another spirit, which by faith discovers how impossibilities may be surmounted, how hills may be made to skip like lambs: and therefore falls a-blowing his ram's horns, in hopes that the walls of Jericho shall fall down; and, like another David, with his sling, he sets upon Goliah, and attacks even the children of Anak. I do not say but this faith sometimes may be very weak, it may be very low; but it is such as makes them venture on duty and difficulty, though trembling. Now, without such a spirit none will follow the Lord full.—For the want of it cuts the sinews of resolute endeavours after universal holiness. It is the hope of victory that makes the soldier to fight; and when he loses, he turns his back: 1 Thess. v. 8, "But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation." Faith must go before and see through difficulties, ere a person can come up and break through them.—Again, the want of it makes men, like Issachar, to couch under the burden, or as one who is upon an unruly horse, and finding there is no mastering of him, he lays the reins on his neck. This is the reason why people, after some struggle against sin, turn worse than ever. They find difficulties in the way of duty, they have no hope to surmount these, and therefore give it over. But how can any reach the promised land, without the promise in their eye? How shall they go through in the spiritual battle, while they throw away the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, the word of promise, and leave themselves destitute of the shield of faith? Without this they cannot go out in the name of the Lord against their enemies, and so must turn their back as foiled.

(4.) Caleb's spirit of faith looked to the Lord, as sufficient to bear him over all difficulties. He saw the Anakims as well as the rest, and had as little confidence in himself as they had; but he had confidence in the Lord, and so would go against them in the strength of the Lord. Such a spirit have all the saints: Psalm lxxi. 16, "I will go in the strength of the Lord." Isa. xlv. 24, "Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." This carries them to the Lord as the fountain of strength; while as to the rest of the world, their spirit is as a pipe laid short of the fountain, by which no water can be conveyed. Without such a spirit, none can follow the Lord fully.—For, there are difficulties in

the way to heaven, which none can overcome, but by divine strength: 2 Cor. xii. 9, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Unmortified corruptions will be as heavy as a giant upon a child, till God himself take part with the soul, and give the victory. They may lie under them and groan, but who shall roll away the stone, if the angel come not from heaven for that purpose? Wo to him that is alone when he falleth! without the Lord, the least work of religion is above us. "Without me," saith he, John xv. 5, "ye can do nothing." The slenderest temptation will be found a wind from hell sufficient to blow over the man that is not supported; the least duty, a task which they cannot perform acceptably. Where the Spirit of the Lord does not draw, we never will follow. Thus that spirit of dependence upon the Lord is necessary.

3. This spirit is a spirit of holy courage and resolution, Numb. xiv. 9. Such a spirit, in some measure, have all the saints: Prov. xxviii. 1, "The wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous is bold as a lion." Their spirit is peremptory and resolute for following the Lord whithersoever he goeth, not to be diverted by any means from their great interest. And though the godly may be naturally fearful and unsteady, yet this spirit in the things of God will prevail, seeing that their all lies at the stake; without such a spirit, none can follow the Lord fully, for the following, among other reasons.—Because,

(1.) The work of religion is a great work, for which we had need of courage and resolution. The outward work of religion is great work, the inward work is still greater: Prov xvi. 32, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty: and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city." The labour of the hand is hard, the labour of the head is harder, but the labour of the heart hardest of all; and religion is work of that sort. To work out our own salvation, to serve our generation, to get heart, lip, and life cleansed, is work sufficient to fear cowards who have not another spirit.—Again, consider,

(2.) That our own strength is small. O how weak is man at best for the work! What a vast disproportion there is betwixt our strength and the least duty, if done aright! 2 Cor. iii. 5, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." When we view our work, how far it is above us, we may say, "Who is sufficient for these things?" 2 Cor. ii. 16. Here is need of another spirit to influence men, in attempting to roll away the stone, that is so far above their strength. But holy courage, through faith in Christ, will do it: Phil iv. 13,

"I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me."—Consider,

(3.) That our opposition is great. If ye have a desire for the heavenly Canaan, ye must fight your way thither over much opposition, and so have need of another spirit. He that overcometh shall be crowned. If you have a desire to follow the Lord fully, you must follow him over much opposition.

1. From the devil: Eph. vi. 12, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against spiritual wickednesses in high places." No sooner was man set up in the world, than the devil attacked and overcame him: and as soon as a soul begins to set heaven-ward again, the devil then will be on his top. O it is much to stand, when hell is in arms against us, when the black bands of temptations make an attack! Satan is a powerful and subtle enemy. He will be sure to attack you on your weak side, and suit his temptations to your circumstances. Thus he did with our Saviour; for when he had fasted forty days, the devil said to him, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones may be made bread," Matth. iv. 3. He has his temptations for the poor and for the rich. He tempts the poor to steal, and the rich to deny God. Hence said Agur, "Give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain," Prov. xxxx. 8, 9. He has temptations for youth and for age, for the joyful and for the mournful Christian. Sometimes he appears as a fox transforming himself into a lamb. Sometimes he roars as a lion. There is thus need of a spirit of courage to oppose him.

2. We have great opposition from the world.

(1.) From the things of the world. They collect their bands to encounter those who would follow the Lord, to turn them back.—There is the white band of the world's smiles, stained already with the blood of thousands. Many have been wounded, and many slain by these: Prov. i. 32, "For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them." Many a soul has died by the embraces of a smiling world, for it does with men as the panther with other beasts, who draws them after him with the sweet smell of his breath, hiding his head, while he afterwards devours them. Its profits and pleasures are syren songs, which end in bitter lamentations. They are silken cords, which afterwards grow as iron fetters, which may cost a flood of tears to get them off. Here is a trial for true courage of spirit. O it is a great spirit that rises above the world when it courts us! while our own spirit naturally loves it, even when it gives us gall to drink.—

There is next the black band of the world's frowns. The world often puts on the lion's skin, and brings a train of crosses against the followers of the Lord: Acts xiv. 22, "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." The world often turns stepmother to the godly, who may have enough ado to get their bread, while plenty flows to its own darlings. We see how the world's sun went down at noon with Job. There is need of another spirit to carry a man above these, to give him another joy when that of the world fails, and to make him sing as the nightingale when the very storm is at his back. Thus did Habakkuk when the world failed: chap. iii. 18, "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation." Again, there is the mixed band of the world's cares. These are the world's thorn-hedge, which the Christian must break through, or else they will choke the seed of the word in his heart, Matth. xiii. 22. This is the thorny crown it sets upon our heads so soon as we set out into the world. How hard is it to keep our ground here! The care of a family, the care of the body, is that which has rendered many careless of eternity. Yea, and care we must: our meat will not be found among our feet, as that of the beasts, nor will it drop into our mouths without care. But O what need of another spirit to use these things as if we used them not! But,

(2.) We have great opposition from the men of the world. The devil has his agents in the world, factors for hell, that will give much ado to those who would follow the Lord fully. And people may lay their account to be attacked with their tongues. They are not for heaven who cannot digest the mockings of a graceless generation; nor are they meet for it that will pass over their duty, only for the virulent reproaches they may meet with in their way. These sting severely, but there must be a resoluteness against them, to please God. Let a generation of imbittered spirits say what they will; let Christians strive to have the testimony of God and their own conscience, which will be a secret support, condemn them who will.—They will attack them with their feet. The example of an unholy life: Matth. xviii. 7, "Woe unto the world, because of offences! for it must be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh." The world lieth in wickedness; it is hard to bear out against the stream of example set before us. To be righteous as Noah in his generation, to keep clean garments in Sardis, is not easy: Matth. xxiv. 12, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Example ruins many, who like sheep, when one gets into the water, the rest readily follow.—They will attack them with their hands. The hands of persecutors are

sometimes bound up; the Lord seems now to be loosing them; and some are already finding the smart of that. And it is like it will not be so easy to follow the Lord as it has been for some time past. But they who will follow the Lord fully, must have another spirit, which may urge them on to lose all, rather than lose their soul by leaving off to follow the Lord.

Finally, The Christian has great opposition from his own lusts. He will not only find a war without, but also a war within him: Gal. v. 17, "For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Our greatest enemies are within our own bosoms.—First, there is the general of this army, indwelling sin, the corrupt nature, the old man, flesh, called sin by way of eminence: Rom. vi. 12, "Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lust thereof." The plague of the heart: 1 Kings viii. 38. This is the cursed ground, bringing forth briars and thorns. There must be another spirit to draw this to the cross: Gal. v. 24, "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts."—Next, there is a swarm of hellish soldiers under him, particular lusts, as pride, covetousness, envy, malice, and the like, that dog the man wherever he goes, and will give him enough ado to resist: Rom. vii. 21, "I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me." If you ask their name, it may be Legion, for they are many: Titus iii. 3, "Serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." All sins are radically even in the best. Look through the world, and see what appears there; these swine, who are running on others, show that corruption which is within the whole. Who are their allies? These are the devil, John viii. 44; the world, Tit. ii. 12. All the snares and temptations in the world are allied to some one or other lusts within us, that suits them as tinder to fire.—There is, their quarters, the heart. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders," &c.; and the nearer to us, the more dangerous. The heart is as a common inn, so often thronged with these, that the master is kept out.—There is, their qualities. They are deceitful: Eph. iv. 22, "The old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." Hurtful: 1 Tim. vi. 9, "But they that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."

III. I now proceed to make some improvement of the subject.—And this,

1. In the use of information.—From this we see,

(1.) The great spring of defection and apostacy from the good ways of the Lord. How is it that so many make such a bad account of religion? They have not another spirit. Many, at their first taking up of religion, have great vigour and briskness of spirit; but it is only like a blaze of straw, their oil fails, and their lamps go out. Such appearances denote only awakening, and not changing grace, which they have got; therefore it lasts not. There is no spring of grace in the soul, only some showers from the clouds, watering the old ground of their natural spirits, which is soon dried up. They who thus drink, shall soon thirst again, John iv. 13; it decays by little and little, as the light after sunset, till it be quite dark. Again, because they have not another spirit, that frame of their souls is not fed by nourishment from Christ, as the sincere soul is, who receives out of the fulness of Christ. Hence, for want of nourishment, it dies, and they wither as branches cut off from the trunk, John xv. 6. A branch newly cut off from its stock, and ingrafted into another, may keep a short time green; but if it do not take with the stock, it will wither. Now, they cannot take with the stock, because they have not another spirit: John i. 12, 13, "He came to his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Farther, it is the newness of the thing, not the newness of their nature, that makes that stir among their affections. Hence, when they have a little accustomed themselves to religion, and the duties of it, the newness is gone, and so their delight is gone, their affections settle, for they have not another spirit, to which religion would be its element: John v. 35, "He was a burning and a shining light, and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light." Hence old truths turn stale with many, and nothing relishes with them but some new thing. They are sprightly for a while, but at length their metal is gone, their hearts are deadened, their affections withered, and their consciences seared. Hence, a spirit of reigning sloth, which was only covered, not subdued, rises again, as weeds in the spring, which, though nipped with winter frosts, yet were not plucked up by the roots: Psalm lxxviii. 37, "For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant." They are awakened as with noise a little while, but, because they have not another spirit they fall asleep again.—Finally, hence a spirit of profanity succeeds in many: 2 Pet. ii. 22, "But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing

in the mire." Their lusts, which were forcibly restrained before, break out again with greater violence than ever. The devil returns with seven spirits worse than the first; and not being able to follow the Lord fully, they turn back with the greater violence.

(2.) This instructs us as to the great spring of a divided religion, where there is still one thing or more lacking, Mark x. 21. They have not another spirit: the old spirit may follow the Lord in many steps, but it will never carry a man through with it. There are difficulties in the way to heaven, which it is impossible to pass without another spirit. These are such as,

It is a difficult step to advance into the heart and life of duties, spiritual worship, and the like. Bodily exercise is the farthest the old spirit can carry a man. A bird may as soon fly without wings, or a beast reason, as one that has not another spirit can worship God in spirit.

Another difficult step is, to be denied to duties: Matth. v. 3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The old spirit is a selfish spirit, that does all from and for self. It knows not to strip itself of its own robes, spun out of its own bowels, and to go naked to Christ for a covering. A man shall as soon rend out his own bowels, pluck out his own heart, and cast it from him, as one without another spirit will lay the stress of his salvation on Christ alone, counting as if he had done nothing, when he has done all he can.

A third difficult step is, to give up with bosom idols. Jesus laid the treasure in heaven, on the other side, to that man, Mark x. 21, and directed him to step over his idols, and he should have it; but he was sad, and went away grieved, for he had great possessions. Fire, sword, and gibbet, will not affright some people from following the Lord, who will yet start back, when Christ offers them the knife of mortification, to cut off the offending right hand: 1 Cor. xiii. 3, "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." Thou hast a hand, it is a right hand, it must be cut off, it must be done with thy own consent, nay, thou must put thy own hand to the knife, and thou must labour to carry it through. This is language that will never go down with a man that hath not another spirit.—Hence, men have a heart aversion to encounter heart difficulties in religion. Few see heaven, Why? Heaven's gate is strait, ease is sweet. They are like the rich man in hell, see heaven afar off, but there is a great gulf fixed between them and it. Their base spirit from within, when the man is looking over the gulf, cries, Man, spare thyself, and then the heart starts back. They

love the gold but they do not dig for it. And they have not another spirit, a new spirit, as Caleb had, to put them forward.—Hence any attempts they make that way are faint, and therefore fruitless: Luke xiii. 24, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: For many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Like a cowardly man, offering to cut off his own hand, which threatens the ruin of his whole body, he takes up the knife, lays it to the skin, but always the heart misgives, and he pulls it back. Whereas a man of another spirit, will do it resolutely, because he is resolved not to die. Hence such tampering with idols, in the way of mortification. Then finding the fruitlessness of these faint attempts, they even give over, losing all courage. They see it will not do that way, and they despair of getting any more power over them: Jer. ii. 25, "Withhold thy foot from being unshod, and thy throat from thirst, but thou saidst, There is no hope; no; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go." Lusts are like an unmanageable horse, which therefore gets the reins on his own neck. They have tried to roll the stone away, but it comes down on them again, and therefore they even let it die, and leave it.—Finally, their endeavours then are turned to the soothing of conscience for peace. For this cause the man pretends he can do nothing, but Christ must do all. What is left is but an infirmity, from which the best cannot be freed on this side of the grave; he will look for pardon, and so makes the blood of Christ a defence for his bosom lust. For as great an enmity as the natural man has to Christ, the devil will preach Christ to serve a turn; and thus the grace of God is turned into lasciviousness.

(3.) This subject points out to us, that the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour. He has another spirit. O what a glorious difference does this other spirit make between one man and another! I will instance this in a few things.

How is it that one man contemns the world, with all that is in it, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, while another man adores the world, and drives after it as his chief good and happiness? He drives a trade with another world, looking beyond others. What is it but that he has another spirit, a finer spirit, a spirit of a greater elevation and compass than others, which cannot take up with the little views of time.

How is it that a serious holy Christian, appearing in his own colours, strikes a damp upon the profane, and even on the formal hypocrite? Is it not that another spirit shines out of him, which compels them to fear him, though they hate him, to give him a secret testimony, though openly they reproach him? Is it not because

greater is that spirit which is in the saints, than that which is in the world?

How is it that when many are carried away with the strong tide of an evil time, keeping but one principle, which is to save themselves on any terms, others do resolutely row against the stream, keeping one principle, which is to please God, to follow the Lord, from which they will not be diverted, whatever they meet with in the way? No worldly advantage, the preventing of no worldly loss, do they think worth their going out of their way to attain it. O! is it not another spirit?

How is it that one man enjoys such serenity and tranquillity of mind, amongst the swelling waves of outward trouble, which carry others quite off their feet? That one stands as an unmoveable rock, before the temptations which carry others hither and thither, as the chaff before the whirlwind? Is it anything but another spirit, fixed on the Lord, his word, his promise, which are better things than what the world has, and the tempter offers.

(4.) Hence we may see, the ground and rise of the spiritual combat which is in the saints. They have another spirit. They have a spirit in them, naturally as the rest of the world, which ordinarily takes the first word; but then they have another spirit, that contradicts and corrects it: Gal. v. 17, "For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other." The natural man has one spirit, which is corrupt, and not another; therefore he is wholly corrupt, in heart, lip, and life. The saints in glory have one spirit, which is holy, and not another; therefore they are perfectly holy. But the saints on earth have one spirit that is corrupt; but they have another spirit also; and therefore their heart becomes a field of battle.—Hence we see how it comes to pass that the saints are at war with these lusts, with which the natural man cannot but be at peace. He has another spirit, which is contrary to them, while the natural man's lusts and his spirit are of the same nature, and he has not another spirit contrary to them. If a man have a father, a brother, or son, in the opposite army, how can he find in his heart to lift up a sword against him? The natural man's spirit, in the faint mortification which he makes, says to him, as David said to his three generals, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom." The man that has a wooden leg can take it off, and cast it from him, but how can one do so with his limbs? A man that has meat on his stomach, which loathes and disorders it, can vomit it up, but how can a man do this with a dainty morsel which he loves.—Hence we see also how there comes to be such difficulty in dealing with these lusts;

there is a made resistance by one spirit, which is opposed to another. Lusts have a friend within the bosom of the saints, which takes part with them, and gives that other spirit so much work. You will see in them, as it were, the company of two armies,—twins struggling within them.

(5.) Hence we may see the ground of that enmity that is betwixt the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. There is a holy amity among the saints as people of one spirit, which is a most close knitting thing. They cleave to one Christ: they pursue one object; they point towards one place; because they have all one spirit. And what jars are among them, flow from their own spirits not being sufficiently subdued by that other spirit. But betwixt the godly and the wicked, how can there be but great enmity, seeing the godly have another spirit than they? Those of different spirits and tempers are ill-yoked. This makes that enmity.—It is,

(1.) A spiritual enmity, it breeds a natural antipathy betwixt them, for they have not only other actions, but another spirit. Hence the man whom the world caressed, and embraced, while of the same spirit with itself, when once he becomes truly serious, and gets another spirit, he is quickly turned out of the world's favour, he loathes them, and they loathe him.

(2.) It is a most diffusive enmity; the spirit of the world is carried out after these things which savour of the flesh, that other spirit is carried out after the things which savour of the spirit. The spirit of the world has things which it loves, and hates these which the other spirit loves. Hence such an enmity against holiness of life, against divine ordinances, preaching the word, and other duties of religion; but trace all these to their fountain, they will be found to meet in that of their other spirit.

(3.) It is a most violent enmity; for the two spirits strike like two flints against one another, to raise the fire. No enmity like that which obtains on account of religion; it breaks over all bounds of humanity, while no other reason can be given for it but religion. It sets the daughter against the mother, the son against the father, &c.

(4.) It is a most rooted and fixed enmity. This quarrel began sooner than any in the world; Cain and Abel were thus enemies. Many other quarrels have begun since this one, which have been long since rooted out. But no length of time can root out this; the wicked children continue the quarrel, though they have seen the fathers fall in it.

(6.) This subject directs us to the great object towards which such as would follow the Lord fully are to look, it is to their spirits. If

our spirit be right, we will be carried through; if not, we will fall off. The great work of religion lies inward. Take heed, therefore, to your spirits; see that these be of the right kind, that your hearts be right with God, and sound in his statutes.—I shall have done with,

2. An use of exhortation. Labour then to get another spirit, earnestly seek it, aim at, and pursue after it. To obtain your compliance with this exhortation, I would lay before you the following motives,

(1.) The prevailing spirit among us is a spirit which is our plague, and therefore we have great need to labour for another spirit: Luke xix. 55, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." This is among the rest of our plagues. Men are little at home, weigh not their spirits in the balance of the sanctuary; but their spirit of self-love makes all of high importance, and to appear well, which is their own. There is a sixfold spirit that is our plague this day.—There is,

(1.) A carnal worldly spirit: Phil. iii. 19, "They mind earthly things." Our spirits are sunk in the thick clay of a present world, and have got into an earthly constitution, as if, with our bodies, they were only sprung of earth. From communion and converse with God, our spirits are greatly estranged, but the world gets our first, middle, and last thoughts; so that there seems need of some terrible alarm to make us lift up our heads off that pillow.—There is,

(2.) A private narrow spirit: Phil. ii. 21, "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." O what a rare thing is a public spirit among us this day, a kindly concern for the kingdom and interest of Christ in the world, men naturally caring for these things as their father's concerns. Sirs, our wide mouths will not absolve us from the crime of a narrow spirit in God's matters, more than Jehu's bravado, "Come, see my zeal:" Prov. xxvi. 23, "Burning lips and a wicked heart, are like a potsherd covered with silver dross." The Protestant religion is in hazard abroad and at home; is there any thing of the care of the churches lying upon you? This church is in hazard of falling into the enemy's hands; are your hearts, like good old Eli's, "trembling for the ark?" 1 Sam. iv. 13. Nay, do not many look upon our present privileges with such a despising eye, that it is all one to them whether they sink or swim. Have the attempts of our enemies ever made you go alone to wrestle with God against them? You profess you would have ministers to keep honest; but are we obliged to your wrestlings with God for us on that account? Have we any larger share in your prayers than

we were wont to have? Will the loss of our honesty be to you the loss of many prayers for us in a difficult time? Psalm cxxxii. 9, "Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness, and let thy saints shout aloud for joy." It is a time of much sinning; are you sighing and crying for all the abominations that are in the midst of the land? Ezek. ix. 4. Are you putting to your hand, as you have access, to stop the stream of abounding sin?—There is,

(3.) A stout, sturdy, fearless spirit. I fear, if God look to none but to those who are poor, of a contrite spirit, and who tremble at his word, Isa. lxvi. 2, there will be few amongst us that will get a look of him. How little are we affected with the word, the dispensations of the day, and the signs of the times! Is not the word like a ball thrown against a wall? The custom of hearing it has lessened the value of it. Who is hearkening for the time to come? Does that question lie near your heart, How shall I be carried through in the evil day? Are you putting matters in order between God and you, and preparing an ark for your safety?—There is,

(4.) A proud fiery spirit, while the humble, meek, and lowly spirit does rarely appear. People are so puffed up with conceit of themselves, there is no dealing with them. If they make themselves vile, they will rather be more vile than submit to admonition or reproof. And if they be in the least ruffled, they are ready to cast all ordinances behind their backs. If the whole be not exactly according to their mind, they will contemptuously reject all. Witness the contempt poured by some upon the last fast. Humiliation of heart, and self-denial would cure us of this irreligious heart, which is the bane and ruin of religion among us, and would kindle in us a more kindly warmth of heart towards God and the things that bear his stamp.—There is,

(5.) A formal spirit: 2 Tim. iii. 5, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." The bodily exercise of religion is much amongst many of us, but for exercise unto godliness among us, it appears to be very rare, 1 Tim. iv. 7, 8. And many proclaim themselves utter strangers to it. In the eyes of any discerning Christian, they have so little sense of the vitals of practical godliness, that these things are an absolute mystery to them. It would fare the better with many of us, that we would begin again and lay the foundation of our religion, and follow it out in the great mysteries of the Christian life, mortification of heart corruptions, the life of faith, and communion with God.—There is,

(6.) A profane spirit, where the works of the flesh are manifest. There is a lying spirit, which so possesseth many, that they make no conscience of speaking truth, but lend their tongues for lies.

There is a bitter spirit of cursing and swearing, railing and reproaching, amongst us, so that sober persons may say, as in Psalm lvii. 4, "My soul is among lions; and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword." See also Psalm lxiv. 3—7. A base, sneaking, dishonest spirit, lodges in the breast of many, whose covetous, unrighteous ways, in undermining, deceiving, and wronging their neighbours, will bring a vengeance from heaven on their heads.

(2.) The case of our day requires another spirit than we have. God seems to be speaking to the carnal worldly generation this day, as in Haggai i. 4; Jer. xliv. 4, 5. To the formal and profane, as in Matth. iii. 10. To the private-spirited, as in Amos vi. 1. And to all, as in Amos iv. 12. But O how unsuitable are our spirits to the case of the day! How unmeet are our spirits to act for God! They are too mean to do any thing great and honourable for God and his glory. And doubtless, if we get not another spirit, we will never be honoured of God to perform any thing that is great for him. Our work as Christians is at all times difficult, but we are likely to have a special difficulty in our time. Is the mean and base spirit wherewith we are plagued, meet to set us to oppose the stream and tide of sin that is going through the generation? Is our careless carnal spirit meet to wrestle with God, to keep him still in our land? —Again, how unmeet are our spirits for suffering? The soft and carnal spirit which prevails, suits very ill with a time in which the Lord seems to be about to pluck up and destroy. That spirit of formality and profanity answers very ill with a time in which people's religion may be put to the utmost trial: Isa. xxxiii. 14, "The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites." Verily, if we get not another spirit, a time of trial will make a dreadful discovery among the professed followers of the Lord.

(3.) Does not our own particular case, with respect to eternity, require another spirit? Eternity is no dream, the wrath to come is no scare-crow; these are the greatest of realities, and certainly require our utmost efforts. Does the prevailing temper of our spirits look like the eternal weight of glory that is abiding those who strive, run, wrestle, and fight the good fight of faith? Alas! our spirits are as unlike the attaining it, as the sluggard, who will not plow his field, is like to attain a good crop. They who look for a treasure, dig for it; and they who wish for the prize, run for it; but it is a loitering not a labouring spirit with which most of us are possessed, who have small probability of seeing heaven, unless it will drop down into our mouths.—Again, does our spirit look like flying from the wrath to come, that infinite load of wrath which is abiding a perishing gene-

ration? We seem to be creeping from it rather than fleeing; and therefore it is ready to overtake us. O how would our spirits stir within us, if we were duly affected with eternity, and the danger that our souls are in of the wrath to come!—But farther, how unlike is our spirit to the subduing of strong corruptions within our own breasts! How soft are our spirits against these our deadliest enemies! We must have another spirit, or our spirits will soon be devoured by them.—*Lastly*, There is no following of the Lord fully, and so no heaven, without another spirit; and therefore, as ever we would be found Christians indeed, and safe through eternity, let us labour for that other spirit: "Create in us, O Lord, a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us."—I shall now very briefly attend to

Doctrine III. That those who, by following the Lord fully in the time of general declining, distinguish themselves, God will distinguish them from others, by special marks of favour in the time of general calamity.—The scriptures afford many instances in proof of this, as Noah, Lot, Jeremiah, and many others.

For illustrating this doctrine, we shall,

I. Shew how those must distinguish themselves from others in the time of general declining, who would have the Lord to distinguish them from others in the time of general calamity.—We shall point out,

II. The marks of favour by which, in times of great calamity, God uses to distinguish such.

III. We shall subjoin some reasons of the point, to confirm it.—And,

IV. Make some improvement.

We are then,

I. To shew how those must distinguish themselves from others in the time of general declining, who would have the Lord to distinguish them from others in time of general calamity.—Here we observe,

1. That they must be best, when others are worst: Gen. vi. 9, "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation; and Noah walked with God." Their candle must shine brightest, when that of others is dying out. It is the property of holy zeal for God and his way, to become more vehement by opposition; so that the declining of others is as oil to their flame. It was better with Lot when he dwelt among the Sodomites, than when with his own children in the cave: 2 Pet. ii. 7—10, "And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked, (for that righteous man dwelling

among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds)." The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment, to be punished." "It is time for thee, Lord, to work; for they have made void thy law. Therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold." If religion be dying out among others, this will the more kindle an holy fire of zeal, and increase it in their own breasts.—We observe,

2. That they must cleave to God, especially in that article in which others are leaving him, as in Caleb's case; that is to say, they must be careful that they be not led away with the sins of the time, that they do not enter into the general conspiracy of the generation against the Lord and his way, whether it be against truth or holiness. Thus the promise was to those who kept the life and power of godliness in Sardis, where there was a great general declining, a deadness and formality, and the bare carcase of religion: Rev. iii. 4, "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy."—We observe,

3. That they must witness against every declining, according to their stations, and as they have access, for the exoneration of their own consciences, and the honour of God. Thus did Noah, that preacher of righteousness, to that unrighteous world. These must give a real testimony by their contrary practice, and, as they may have access, labour to withdraw others from sinful courses.—Thus did Caleb.—We observe,

4. That they must be mourners over the sins of others, lamenting them before the Lord; sighing and crying for all the abominations which are done in the midst of the land, Ezek. ix. 4. They must mourn for those who cannot mourn for themselves. When the glory of God is impaired by the sins of an apostatizing generation, their love to the persons of the sinners, and hatred of their sins, must draw tears of godly sorrow from their eyes.

Let us now,

II. Point out the marks of favour by which, in times of general calamity, God useth to distinguish such.—There is,

1. Liberal furniture for duty, in a large communication of the spirit, when the Spirit is withdrawn from others: Matth. x. 19, "But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak." The Lord calls not his people to serve him for nought; he even rewards the will to his work, with strength for it. If they be resolute to bear his burden, God will strengthen the back for it.

Hence it comes to pass, that God's people never make better speed, than when rowing against the stream of opposition.—There is,

2. Intimations of his special love to their souls. Thus had Caleb in the text, the saints of God have often golden days in the dregs of time upon this account. When the deluge of public calamity carries incorrigible sinners before it, with their burden of guilt upon their back, the saints are then made to rest in the evil day, by virtue of that peace which they have with God and their own conscience, Hab. iii. 16.—There is,

3. Special provision in a time of calamity: Psalm xxxvii. 19, "They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied." God riseth often to see well to the provision of those whose work it is to cleave to their duty, and rely on the Lord for their provision: Psalm xxxvii. 3, "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." So that their faces are fatter and fairer than those who eat of the defiled meat.—There is,

4. Special protection in an evil day. God sets a mark on their foreheads: Ezek. ix. 4. "And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof." They are always protected from the evil of trouble; but God sometimes, besides this, affords them special protection from trouble, by some surprising providence removing them out of the way of it; sometimes by making them find favour in the eyes of their enemies: Jer. xv. 11, "The Lord said, verily, it shall be well with thy remnant; verily, I will cause the enemy to intreat thee well in the time of evil, and in the time of affliction." And sometimes by hiding them in the grave before the calamity come on: Isa. lvii. 1, 2, "The righteous man perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace, they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness."

Lastly, He gives them the crown of glory: Rev. ii. 10, "Fear none of these things which thou shalt suffer; behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: Be thou faithful unto the death, and I will give thee a crown of life." He brings them into Canaan above, and crowns them, while others, who forsook God, are for ever forsaken of him; and they who sinned with the multitude, suffer with them for ever: Luke xxii. 28, 29, 30, "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom,

as my father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."—We now proceed very shortly,

III. To subjoin the reasons of the point, to confirm it.—Here we offer the following, viz.

1. It is hard work to follow fully in a declining time, to strive against the stream which is so ready to carry people away: Matth. xxiv. 12, "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Hard to keep warm in cold Sardis, Rev. iii. 4. To keep up the flame of religion, when a deluge of sin comes on, is very hard work. But hard work has always the greatest reward from the Lord.

2. It is a piece of special honour to God; and those who honour him he will honour. It is not so much to follow Christ when he hath a great backing, as to cleave to him when many are dropping off from him on every hand.

3. The Lord orders it so for the encouragement of his people, to follow him fully. He gives them the view of the recompense of reward, to encourage and animate them in pressing forward towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

IV. We are now to make some brief improvement of the whole; and,

I. In an use of information.—We see,

(1.) That none shall be losers at God's hand. They that cleave to him, when others leave him, God will cleave to them when he forsakes others. Our errand will come in his way, and he will shew himself mindful of any respect and love shewn him by them that walk uprightly.—We see,

(2.) That he who walketh uprightly walks surely, come what will come. Whoso wanders from God's way, and follows the multitude to do evil, their feet will slide. But the best preparation and security for a time of general calamity, is to walk with God in a declining time.—We shall only add,

2. An use of exhortation,

We exhort you, then, to follow the Lord fully now. Our time is a declining time. There is a declining from the purity of gospel doctrine and gospel ordinances. There is a horrid declining in practice; the veil is falling off many faces, and the mask of religion. There is a general declining from holiness, and the power of godliness, on the spirits of professors in our day. It is a day of approaching calamity. Would you be safe? Return now, and set your face against the stream; and the more you see others going off from God, cleave the more to him. If you do so, you will be distin-

guished by special marks of favour in a day of public calamity; but if you also go away, your sin will afterwards find you out.

Remember, now you have heard your duty; it is the duty of communicants, and also of others. Remember that it is not enough to set fair off. It is only he that follows fully who will be brought safely to the promised land. It is only he that endureth to the end who will be saved. Be not, therefore, "weary in this well-doing, for in due time ye shall reap, if ye faint not."

THE CHRISTIAN DESCRIBED, THE HYPOCRITE DETECTED.*

SERMON XXXI.

Rom. ii. 28, 29,

For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.

These words are a reason why no man ought to value himself on the externals of religion, for they will go but short way. However they please men, they will never please God. The scope of them is, to show who are the people of God. The Jews of old were the people of God; the Christians are so now, being come in their room. The apostle here distinguishes the people of God into nominal and real ones, calling them Jews, because he was speaking to Jews; the case is the same as to Christians.—In these words, he shews two things.

1. Who are not true Jews, real Christians, or saints indeed, ver. 28; for these are they whom he means by Jews, saying, "He is not a Jew." Not those who are Jews outwardly, Christians and saints by profession, that is, who are only so, and no more; for God requires externals of religion as well as internals, though the former, separate from the latter, avail nothing. But those who have no more religion than what is outward, viz. what men see or may see, they have nothing of the reality of it.

The Jews valued themselves on circumcision, as Christians on

* Delivered in March and April, 1719.

baptism; but true circumcision is not what is outward in the flesh, nor baptism what is by water; that is only so. These external rites signify an inward grace, without which they signify nothing before God. Circumcision was in a hidden part of the body, yet it was on the body, and what might be seen; so religion might be in saints; yet being only what may be seen, will not constitute a person truly religious.—He shows,

2. Who are true Jews, real Christians, or saints indeed? There are two characters of these, which distinguished them from the other. They are,

(1.) Those who are so inwardly, or in the hidden part, which is open to God alone, as well as in the outward part, which appears to the world. These who have the hidden part of religion, which being hid from the world's view, they cannot certainly judge of. Those who have the true circumcision, the spiritual baptism, that is, the circumcision of the heart, Deut. x. 16, by which corrupt lusts are cut off, and the body of sin put off, Col. ii. 11. This is the spiritual, not fleshly circumcision only. It touches on, reforms, and renews our spirit, our soul, the hidden, but most valuable part of a man. The carnal is but the cutting off a bit of the flesh of the body, which might be done while the spirit remained overgrown with unmortified lusts, and the soul quite defiled. The spirit is here opposed to the letter, which last cannot be well understood of the body, but of circumcision, and therefore the spirit also; q. d. and circumcision of the heart, which is circumcision in the spirit or grace of it, (not in the letter, or external rite of circumcision), is the true circumcision. So they have the spirituality of it, which is as the soul thereof, as well as the letter, which is as the body thereof. The spirit of circumcision is the invisible grace signified by it, and joined with it, when it is effectual; the letter of it is the sensible sign or external rite.

(2.) They are such as have God's approbation, commendation, and praise, whether they have men's or not. There is an allusion here to the word Judah, from whom that people, now called Jews, had their name; it signifies praised, Gen. xlviii. 8. These are the true Judahs, whom not only their brethren, but their Father, even God, praises. Outward religion may gain praise of men, who cannot discern what is within; but the true Jew the real Christian, is one approved even by the heart-searching God, according to the reality, and not the appearance.—From this subject I take this

DOCTRINE, That he is not a true Christian, who only in the outward part, and in the letter of religion, approves himself to men;

but he who, by the inner part of religion, and the spirituality thereof, also approves himself to the heart-searching God.

In illustrating this important truth, I shall,

I. Speak to this point generally.

II. Consider it more particularly.—I shall,

I. Speak to this point more generally.—Here I propose,

I. To shew that there is such a difference in the visible church, that there are some who are only Christians outwardly, and that there are others who are also Christians inwardly.

II. To inquire what are the causes of this difference?

III. To point out what is the outside and letter of religion, which only makes an outside Christian, and what the inside and spirit of religion is which makes a genuine Christian.

IV. To confirm the doctrine.—I am,

I. To shew that there is such a difference in the visible church, that there are some who are only Christians outwardly, and that there are others who are also Christians inwardly.

This difference appears many ways. It appears,

1. In the very different characters given those who profess the same faith and true religion. The preachers of the gospel are fishers of men, but they are not all good that come by profession into the net, Matth. xiii. 47, 48. The tares and the wheat grow together in the field of the church, the goats and the sheep go together all the day, till the great Shepherd separate them. And as to virgin-professors, some are wise, and have oil in their vessels, with their lamps; others are foolish, Matth. xxv. who mock God with fair promises, befool even the godly, who looked well upon them, and, worst of all, befool themselves in the latter end, when the Bridegroom cometh.—This appears,

2. In the very different effects religion has on the lives of those who are called Christians. There are some whose religion has a powerful efficacy on their hearts and lives to make them holy, others who have nothing but an idle form, having no more sanctifying power with it, than a painted fire has to burn: 2 Tim. iii. 5, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. The knowledge of some is confined to their heads, it never gets down to their hearts: Tit. i. 16, "They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him." Others, by reason of their light, dare not venture on an ill thing, more than on a precipice. Religion makes some persons godly, sober, and righteous, binds powerfully on them their duty to God, to themselves, and to their neighbour. The pretended religion of others, leaves them loose as to all those things. It never

checks them when neglecting secret prayers, or prayers in the family, or when disposed to swear, drink, lie, defraud, &c.—This appears,

3. In the very different acceptance with God which persons' prayers get. There are some whose duties are very pleasing to God, they have a sweet savour in his nostrils: their words are registered before him, their tears are bottled, their sighs and groans are regarded, their will is accepted for the deed. But there are others whom God abhors, and also their duties. The word is preached to them, but it never reforms them; yet they hold on with their attendance on ordinances, and it may be also with their prayers. What says the Lord of all such? "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination." "For all these things hath my hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord; but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's flesh; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations." "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me? saith the Lord; I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats," Prov. xxviii. 9; Isa. lxvi. 2, 3, and i. 11.—This appears,

4. From the very different sense and feeling which those have of the advantage of religion, the ordinances and duties thereof. Some are acquainted with the gain of religion, and, from their own experience, can give a solid reason why they follow it: 1 Tim. vi. 6, "But godliness with contentment is great gain." They have tasted of communion with God in duties, and of access to him, of the sanctifying influences of the Spirit in ordinances: Mic. ii. 7, "O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the Lord straitened? are these his doings? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?" But unto others all these things are in very deed but as empty husks: Prox. xiv. 10, "The heart knoweth his own bitterness, and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy." They abide in the outer court of religion all their days; they see not its intrinsic glory, nor taste of its kernel or marrow. They keep up a form of duties from custom, and an unenlightened conscience; but they feel nothing in them kindly to draw their hearts towards God. —This appears,

5. In the very different effects of the religion which those profess.

Grace is of a growing nature, and it will grow, though not visible at all times: Prov. iv. 18, "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." And the longer that saints have a standing in religion, they will be the more firmly rooted; though perhaps their affections be not always so vigorous, yet solid tenderness will display itself with them: Psalm xcii. 13, 14, "Those that are planted in the house of the Lord, shall grow up and flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age: they shall be fat and flourishing." And if they fall, they will not lie still, but recover again: Psalm xxxvii. 24, "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand." But what are the effects which the religion of many has? Some grow up to their false pitch, and there they stand without motion: Prov. xxvi. 14, "As the door turneth on his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed." They think they are right, and they seek no farther. Some, instead of growing better, grow worse and worse; the longer they live, they are the more unholy, more untender in the substantials of moral duties; and some throw aside the mask altogether, and, in sight of the world, desert to the devil's camp, by falling into some profane course, apostatising upon some temptation or other, and so, as they were before loathsome before God, they become also loathsome before his people: Rev. iii. 16, "So, then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." This appears,

Lastly, In the very different passage which those have out of time into eternity. True, all must die, that is the point in which we all meet; but as true is it, that it is the point where outside and inside Christians part for ever: Psalm xxxvii. 37, 38, "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the latter end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together; the end of the wicked shall be cut off." Though they have lived in the same church together, under the same ordinances, gone to prayers together, to one communion-table, when they come to that step where their ways part, they separate never to meet more. The one goes to the society of God, angels, and saints; and their unseen religion terminates in a glorious open reward, their grace in glory, their inward beauty in shining as stars in the firmament. The other gets his portion with reprobates, and those who had as little of the shew, as of the reality of religion: Psalm cxxv. 5, "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity."—I shall point out,

II. What are the causes of this difference which obtains betwixt Christians and others.—Among others, there is,

1. The very different way that persons come by their religion; if we examine outside and inside Christians, how they came by the religion they severally have, it will be found, that the religion which they have is answerable to the way they came by it.—Thus,

(1.) There is a difference in the weight which their entering on their religion had on their spirits. Some come very lightly by their religion; hence it sits lightly upon them, and often goes as lightly from them. They venture upon building a tower, without deliberately counting the cost. To others it is not so easy, but they are brought to the utmost seriousness in the matter, Luke xiv. 28, 29; hence they go to the bottom of the matter, while others satisfy themselves with superficial work.

(2.) There is a difference in the depth of their conviction and humiliation: Luke vi. 48, 49, "He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock, and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that, without a foundation, built an house on the earth, against which the stream beat vehemently, and immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great." The plough of conviction lightly going over the fallow ground of the heart, is sufficient to make an outside Christian: Matth. xiii. 5, 20, "Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth, and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it." If he have as much of it as to let him see the evil and danger of a life quite profane, without so much as the form of godliness, it is sufficient to make him put on the form. But it must be carried deeper, to make an inside Christian, even to the root of the most inward beloved lust, to the sin of one's nature, and to the discovery of Christ for sanctification, as well as justification.

(3.) There is a vast difference in their light and illumination in the knowledge of Christ: John iv. 10, "Jesus answered, and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." This is plainly intimated in the wise and foolish builders and virgins; so that an outside Christian has never been right in the head. All their insight into the excellency of Christ and religion, has left them fools, while others have been made really wise, their judgment rectified, their taste purified, so as to be capable to discern things concerning their souls in their native colours. Hence that glory in Christ has been

seen by the one, which has darkened all created glory, made them content to part with all for him, while the other has always some lust or other more dear to them than Christ and religion.—There is,

(4.) A difference in the issue of their exercises about their soul's case. In the one they have issued in the change of their nature, the taking away of the heart of stone, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, the making of them new creatures, putting off the old man, and putting on the new. But in the other, whatever stir has been made in the affections, whatever griefs or joys they have had, the stony heart has remained untaken away, Matth. xiii. 5; so, though they have become other men than they were before, yet not new men.—Another cause of difference is,

2. The different ways in which professors follow religion. This, if attended to, cannot fail to make a mighty difference.

(1.) Some make religion their business, their main business, in the world: Gen. v. 24, "And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him." Religion is their all. They see nothing they have to do in the world, but it is either their salvation-work or their generation-work, so that they must observe God in all things. And this makes an inside Christian: Psalm cxix. 6, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments." Others make religion but a bye-work; their main business is of another kind, how to please themselves, how to advance their temporal interest; and this makes an outside Christian. In regard to the one, all things else about him bow to his religion, he cuts and carves them as may best suit God's honour, and his soul's welfare; whereas, as to the other, he makes his religion bow to his other designs, takes so much of it, and no more, as may leave him in quiet possession of some lust or other.

(2.) They follow religion from different principles, motives and ends.

[1.] Some follow it from natural principles and motives; that which moves them to it is a natural conscience, in some sort enlightened by the word and providence, which will give them no rest in the utter neglect of religion. Fear of punishment, or hope of reward, are powerful enough to make an outward Christian. But an inside Christian has a gracious principle of love to God and holiness implanted in him, the law is written in his heart, he has a new nature, which inclines him unto universal holiness, and thereby he is kindly drawn to follow religion, upon a view of its inward beauty; and thus he fills up his character.

[2.] Some aim at approving themselves to men in their religion. They seek a name by it, they desire thus to advance their credit and reputation among the sober part of the world, Matth. vi. 2; and

seeming to be religious will satisfy, because men can judge no farther than the outward appearance. But others study to approve themselves to God: 2 Cor. v. 9, "Wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him." Now, since God cannot be deceived with outward appearances, this engages them to be careful of the hidden man of the heart, and to value no approbation of any, if the Master approve them not.—From what has been observed, we may learn,

That there is something in religion above nature's reach. O study to attain it! The mystery of godliness is a great mystery. It is no easy thing to be a Christian. The difference betwixt the godly and others lies not in externals, but in internals, things removed out of the view of the world, and open to God only. O labour to study internal religion, and to approve yourselves to God who searcheth the hearts!—Try yourselves. Consider to which of the two sorts you belong, whether you be real Christians or not. Never value yourselves on the outward part or letter of religion, for you may have that and be stript of all by apostacy to which you lie open, and will be turned out with the workers of iniquity at last, though you still keep on the mask. We must all appear before the tribunal of Christ. Study that religion which will be approved by him there.—I now proceed to consider,

III. What is the outside and letter of religion, which only makes an outside Christian, and what is the inside and spirit of it, which makes a Christian?—Here I observe,

1. That the outside of religion is that part of it which lies open to the view of the world, by which men form their estimate, not God: 1 Sam. xvi. 7, "But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature, because I have refused him; for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." It comprehends all church privileges, duties, whether of doing or suffering, and attainments lying open to the view of men. Men may come a great length in this, and yet be nought in God's esteem.—I observe

2. That the letter of religion is that part of it which is agreeable to the letter of the law, whether in externals or internals. And it comprehends not only the outside, which is open to man's view, but also internal dispositions, exercises and attainments, as to the matter of them; for example, Judas's sorrow for sin, the stony ground's joy at receiving the seed of the word, and the hypocrite's delight in approaching to God, Isa. lviii. which have the matter, but not the form and manner, and so is like a body without the soul.—I observe,

3. That the inside of religion is that part of it which is open to

the all-seeing eye of God, Matth. vi. 4, "That thine alms may be in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly." What persons go about, out of mere conscience towards God, as knowing that the world either is not, or cannot be witness to it, and though it was a witness, it does not know right or wrong; but such setting themselves in the presence of God, are carried to their duty as if the eyes of all the world were upon them, Acts xxiv. 16. But this is not all.—I observe,

Lastly, That the spirit or spirituality of religion is the internal grace, joined to the external performance; it is the right manner, joined to the right matter of religion: John iv. 24, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." 1 Tim. i. 5, "Now, the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned," as when heart-humiliation is joined with bending of the knees to God in prayer, and the duty is gone about from right principles, and directed to a right end.—It remains that,

IV. I confirm the doctrine,

That not the former, but the latter sort of religion, marks a true Christian, is evident, if we consider,

1. That there is nothing in the outside or letter of religion, but what one may reach in an unregenerate state, in which no man can ever please God, Rom. iii. 8. The hypocrite's mask may take in the whole outward man, and the devil's goats may resemble Christ's sheep, in all but the hidden man of the heart. All these are but acts of moral discipline, not requiring a new nature from whence to spring, but may arise from the old corrupt nature, assisted by external revelation, and the common influences of the Spirit.—It will be farther evident, if we consider,

2. That the outside and letter of religion may be without any true love to God in the heart, which yet is the substance of practical holiness, and the comprehensive duty of the whole law: Ezek. xxxiii. 31, "And they come unto me, as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." Love to God makes all duties run in a right channel; but how can this be found, when the natural enmity is not overcome by regenerating grace? Self-love may supply its place, so far as the outside and letter of religion go, and that upon this principle, Job iii. "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life."—This will also be evident, if we consider,

3. That the outside and letter of religion may consist with the

reign of sin in the heart: 2 Tim. iii. 5, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power of it." Such in themselves are weak, and can never turn sin off the throne in the soul. Hence it is that every hypocrite is a slave to some lust or other; whatever be his attainments, this always remains true of him, Mark x. 21. This kind of religion is ever like the legs of the lame, unequal.—This will be evident, if we consider,

4. That men are in religion only what they are before God, not what they are before men. When God directs Abraham to a holy walk, he says, "Walk before me," Gen. xvii. 1. If God did not observe the hearts, the insides of men, the principles of their actions, an outside religion would be sufficient. But what does it avail before the all-seeing God, to cleanse the outside of the platter, while the inside is full of ravening, while that is wanting which God chiefly requires and delights in? Psalm li. 6, how is it possible that the man should be approved of God?—This will be evident, if we consider,

Lastly, That the great difference of accepted and unaccepted performances, dispositions, &c., does not lie in the letter but in something else. Cain and Abel both offered, the one acceptably, the other not. Gen. iv. 3, 4, 5, where lay the difference? The apostle shows it, Heb. xi. 4, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness, that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh." Peter and Judas both mourned, and we need not hesitate to say, that the mourning of the latter in itself was fully as hearty as that of the former, but they differed in their kind, the one was godly sorrow, the other was the sorrow of the world. The trial of men's works is not only by *what* they have wrought, but *how* they have wrought: John iii. 21, "But he that doth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."

V. I now come to make some brief improvement.—We infer,

1. What are those Christians, who do not so much as approve themselves to men, by the outside, and letter of religion. Those surely have nothing of God, and shall never see heaven, if they change not their course of life: Matth. v. 20, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." How many are there among us this day, whose way of life is a scandal to Christianity, who are in the church, as boils, botches, and sores, are in the body, serving for nothing but to grieve the spirits of others who have any concern in them? What sort of Christians are

prayerless persons, liars, Sabbath-breakers who loiter away whole Sabbaths, unclean persons? &c. 1 Pet. iv. 18, "And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinners appear?" The day will come, when such will see that it had been their happiness to have lived and died among Pagans.—We infer,

2. That those also are a sad sort of Christians, who, if they can approve themselves to men, make it none of their business to approve themselves to God: Rev. iii. 1, "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." How many are there, with whom their credit goes farther than their conscience! And therefore, if they can carry their wickedness, so as none but God may see it, they value not his eye on them: Numb. xxxii. 23, "But if you will not do so, behold you have sinned against the Lord; and be sure your sin will find you out." This practical atheism will be bitterness in the end, when the day comes, when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to the gospel, Rom. xi. 16. Ah! how many cast a fair cloak of profession over reigning lusts; but behold their end: Psalm cxxv. 5, "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity; but peace shall be upon Israel."

II. I shall consider this point more particularly, and shew, in some particulars, how far one may go, and yet be an outside Christian, and in what respects the inside Christian goes beyond him, and these jointly, in the following propositions.

I. That he is not a true Christian who only bears the visible badges of Christianity, but he who, with the visible badges, also partakes of the invisible grace.

II. That he is not a true Christian, whose outward man is only cleansed from the gross pollutions of the world, but he whose inward man is also cleansed.

III. That he is not a true Christian who only performs the duties of external obedience, but he who, with them, joins the duties of internal obedience.

IV. That he is not a true Christian, who has inside religion only in the letter, but he who has it also in its spirituality.—These I shall illustrate in their order.—I observe,

I. That he is not a true Christian, who only bears the visible badges of Christianity, but he who, with the visible badges, also partakes of the invisible grace.—Mark xvi. 16, "He that believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." The visible badges of Christianity are the sacraments, baptism, and the Lord's Supper; by partaking of these, we are distinguished from Pagans; but there is an invisible grace, without which these avail nothing to salvation.—For,

1. One may be baptised in the name of Christ, and yet be no true Christian, but even at the last only an outside one; as in our text, "For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh." We find some have been bred Jews or pagans, and, by their own free choice, have turned Christians, and received the seal of the covenant, and after all been naught: Acts viii. 13, 21, "Then Simon himself believed also; and when he was baptised, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs that were done. But Peter said to him, Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for thy heart is not right in the sight of God!" How much more may persons amongst us be such, who were baptised in their infancy with water, which was not their choice, but a benefit they had by their parents' care, and from Christianity's being the religion of our country! And how little it avails many, and what good they make of it, may be learnt from this, that the impressions of their baptismal engagements are so slight on them that they never mind them, many baptised persons pass year after year, without preparing themselves for the Lord's table. But he is a true Christian, who has the invisible grace signified by baptism. See the difference betwixt outside and inside Christians in this, Matth. iii. 11, "I indeed baptise you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is greater than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." 1 Pet. iii. 21, "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." The outside Christian may be baptised with water, but the inside is baptised with the Holy Ghost, working like fire, burning up the lusts of the flesh. He is born of water, and the Spirit, working like water, to the washing away of the natural filthiness of the spirit with which he was born, on whose conscience Christ's blood is sprinkled, on whose soul Christ's spirit has savingly operated to his spiritual cleansing. In this the inside goes beyond the outside Christian.

2. In like manner, persons may be admitted to the Lord's table, and yet not be true Christians. Though this be only the privilege of saints, yet a person may be a communicant, who is nothing more than an outside Christian. While others are debarred, they may be admitted to an external partaking of the children's bread, and yet be but dogs in the sight of the heart-searching God: Luke xii. 26, "Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and have drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets." Matth. xxii. 13, "And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having

a wedding-garment? and he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness, there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." A competency of knowledge, with an appearance of seriousness of an holy life, will entitle persons to this privilege before the church, who can judge only by the outward appearance; but he is a true Christian who is admitted to communion with God in that ordinance: Cant. v. 1, "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse, I have gathered my myrrh with my spice, I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey. Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." In this matter, the inside Christian goes beyond the outside one. The outside Christian gets the token from men, the inside Christian has also the Lord's token. The one only eats the bread of the Lord, the other, with it, eats that bread which is the Lord: John vi. 57, "He that eateth me, he shall live by me;" he feeds by faith on a crucified Christ, unites with him, as partaking of his Spirit, of all the benefits of his purchase, to his spiritual nourishment, and growth in grace. The one is held in the outer court, the other is admitted into the inner, and is there feasted in greater or lesser measures. The lusts of the former are strengthened by the abuse of that ordinance, those of the latter are weakened by the holy use of it.—I observe,

II. That he is not a true Christian, whose outward man only is cleansed from the gross pollutions of the world, but he whose inward man is also cleansed. Saving grace penetrates to the inside, and stays not in the outside only: Psalm xxiv. 34, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully." A person may be clean from gross pollutions of the outward man, and yet be but an outward Christian; no swearer, liar, Sabbath-breaker, fornicator, &c., and yet no Christian, Luke xxviii. 11. Negative holiness and outside religion, though the want of it will damn the profane, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, yet the having it will not keep the outside Christian from ruin. A blameless life in the world, though good in itself, yet comes not the length of true Christianity. There are several things beside saving grace, that may in some measure cleanse the conversation from gross pollutions.—Among others, there is,

1. Good education, and good company, as in the case of Joash under the tutorage of Jehoiada. This may chain men's lusts, though it cannot change their nature; their heart is of an apish nature, apt to follow example. Though readily the worst example is the most taking, yet good example has a mighty influence, especially when persons are brought up with it from their childhood.—There is,

2. A good natural temper and disposition. Many a person is more indebted to his natural temper, than to the tenderness of his conscience, for his cleanness from gross pollutions. It is evident, that several persons who have no real religion, nay, nor even the form of it, may be sober, as it would be a pain and a torment to them to go to the extravagant courses in which others indulge themselves. But no man is born a true Christian, as he is with his natural temper; religion in reality is a supernatural temper: 2 Pet. i. 4, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."—There is,

3. Their being kept out of the way of temptation. It is a mercy to be so kept; but while people's corruptions are not tried with a suitable bait, they cannot so well know what influence the commandment has or has not upon them. The cleanness of the outward conversation of many is owing more to those circumstances in which they were placed in the world, than to any gracious disposition; as may appear from the case of some who kept right as long as they were not tried, but so soon as the trial of their corruptions comes they give way.—There is,

4. The workings of a natural conscience under the common influences and convictions of the Spirit, and a rousing ministry: Mark vi. 20, "For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man, and an holy, and observed him: and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly." The preaching of the word sometimes serves to embalm dead souls, who are never by it quickened. It also sets the natural conscience a-working to purify the outward man, while the inner is never renewed. It brings on many so far, as that they are not far from the kingdom of God, who yet never have power to go forward to it.

5. Self-love may do it, in so far as a regard to their soul or body, credit or reputation, may move men to all this. Fear of punishment, and hope of reward, are powerful incentives, where God's authority is but little valued; nay, some reigning lust, as covetousness, pride, or ambition: Matth. vi. 2, "Therefore, when thou dost thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues, and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward." But what avails all this to salvation, while the hidden man of the heart is sunk in pollutions before the all-seeing God, while the man is as a painted sepulchre, fair without, but within full of rottenness: Ezek. viii. 12, "Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what

the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, the Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth." It is a weak evidence to lean to outward religion. But the true Christian has this cleanness of the outward conversation, and besides goes farther than the outward Christian in that point, in two particulars.

(1.) The inside Christian joins internal purity to external: Psalm xxiv. 4, "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul to vanity, nor sworn deceitfully." Matth. v. 8, "Blessed are the poor in heart, for they shall see God." He does not sit down contented with outside purity, as the other does, but his chief concern is the heart, the fountain of all impurity of life. And though the world cannot charge him with any gross pollutions, he finds he has work enough to do with the blind mind, the rebellious will, and the carnal corrupt affections. He accordingly strives to get them mortified: Gal. v. 24, "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts." Though the world sees not, yet, since God sees the disorder of his heart, that is enough to humble him, and give him new errands to Christ for his blood and Spirit.

(2.) Even his external purity is from religious motives, springs, and principles. Thus Joseph, Gen. xxxix. 9, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" In this he serves God, while in it the outward Christian does but serve himself. It is God's authority that sways him to it; though his natural inclinations be to break out, yet the fear of God in his heart does restrain him. And if he be surprised into temptations, the offence and dishonour to God weighs more with him than all the shame and loss in the world which he incurs.

From all which we may learn, that certainly they are not true Christians, who are profane in their walk, whose conversation is not so much as cleansed from gross pollutions, such as cursers and swearers, drunkards, mockers at religion, obscene speakers, unclean persons, &c. Gal. v. 19, 20, 21. These bear the devil's mark on their foreheads, Isa. iii. 19; and have not so much as the rude draughts of the form of godliness.—Hence,

Let no man value himself on the cleansing of the outward man from those pollutions, for a person may go all that length, and much farther, and yet be a cast-away. Religion is much deeper than this is, and is more inward. What the world observes least, God looks most to. Therefore study the inwards of religion, truth and purity in the inward parts.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

SERMON XXXII.

ROM. ii. 28, 29,

For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.

HAVING, in the preceding discourse, considered the two first propositions which I laid down for illustrating the second doctrinal point, I go on to the

III. That he is not the true Christian who only performs the duties of external obedience, but he who also with them joins the duties of internal obedience. It is not the outward duties of obedience, but those which are inward, which constitute a true Christian. A hypocrite may go the whole round of outward duties, and thus have a form of godliness, so as, to the view of the world, he appears nothing short of the true Christian.—Thus, for instance,

1. A man may perform the external duties of righteousness and morality towards his neighbour, and yet be no more than an outward Christian. He may be just in his dealings with men: Luke xviii. 11, "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." He may be liberal and abundant in mercy towards the needy, 1 Cor. xiii. 3, and yet after all no true Christian. True Christianity makes a good neighbour, makes him abhor every unjust and dishonest thing, it renders him true to his word, and upright in his dealings in the world; but when a man has this and no more, he has but one half, and hardly the half, of what is necessary to make a true Christian.—Besides this,

2. A man may perform the outward duties of piety towards God, yet after all be but an outside Christian. For pointing out the hypocrite's attainments in this respect, I would have you consider,

(1.) That persons may attend public ordinances, and not only so, but they may be very punctual in their attendance; they may be far from loitering away Sabbaths at home, or from satisfying themselves with a partial attendance, as in Isa. lviii. 2, "Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of our God." They may behave themselves gravely and attentively, and neither be sleepers

nor gazers, far less laughers at ordinances, and yet after all nought in God's esteem: Ezek. xxxiii. 31, "And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." They may be at much pains in following ordinances from place to place: John vi. 24, 26, "When the people, therefore, saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus.—Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." They may talk well of what they hear, and after all be but outside Christians: 1 Cor. xiii. 1, "Though I speak with the tongues of men or of angels, and have not charity, I am become as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."—Consider,

(2.) That they may be praying persons, and so carry religion into their families, and into their closets: Jer. xii. 2, "Thou hast planted, yea, they have taken root; they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit; thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins." Even secret prayers, where no eye but the Lord's doth see, is a piece of bodily exercise, not beyond the walk of a hypocrite, which an awakened conscience may put a person upon at first, and other selfish principles may keep them at it. They may be persons of many prayers, not like those who pray some, but who indeed pray much: Heb. xii. 17, "For ye know how that afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."—Consider,

(3.) That they may not only do much, but they also may be sufferers for religion, suffering not only to the spoiling of their goods, but even unto death, and yet be naught in God's esteem; 1 Cor. xiii. 3, "And though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." Hypocrisy is such a salamandar, as can live in the fire of persecution, of which there have been many instances; namely, of such whom the violent wind of persecution has not been able to drive off the Lord's way, but the warm sun of prosperity has done their business, to their undoing.

3. They may join both the outward of the first and second tables, and yet be but outside Christians. There are some who are very upright in their dealings with men, yet have not so much as a form in regard to the duties of piety. Others who do not neglect duties of piety towards God, but they make no conscience of their duty to their neighbour, but where they apprehend their worldly interest will drive to it, right or wrong. Persons may even join

both together, and yet be naught in God's esteem. "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican; I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all I possess," Luke xviii. 12, "Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless," Phil. iii. 6.—All this may be, and yet not beyond the boundaries of Pharasaical righteousness: Matth. v. 20, "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." The reason of this is manifest, namely, that all these things being but bodily exercises, are within the compass of nature, and do not require any supernatural grace to the bare performance of them; if the conscience be in any measure awakened, persons may thus be influenced to perform them; and custom may so habituate them, that the performance may be consistent enough with the reign of sin in the heart. But he only is a true Christian who joins internal to external obedience: spiritual exercise to bodily exercise in religion. The inside exceeds the outside Christian in various particulars.—As,

(1.) The inside Christian performs the duties of evangelical obedience, in subjecting his whole heart and soul to the Lord, as well as the outward man. This is the spiritual service which declares a man to be a true Christian: "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth," John iv. 23, "For we are the circumcision, that worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh," Phil. iii. 3. The bulk of the hypocrite's religion lies in externals, but that of the true Christian's lies in internals, in faith, love, resignation, and other parts of unseen religion. Their chief labour is with the heart, to notice the risings of corruptions, their bewailing the defects which the world cannot perceive, and mourning over the sin of their nature, the spring of all evil: Gal. v. 24, "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts."

(2.) The inside Christian is unreserved and universal in his obedience, which the outside Christian never is. They have still some lusts with which they can never part, they reign in them.—Enmity against the power of godliness: 1 John iii. 12, "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother; and wherefore slew he him? because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous."—Self-seeking: John v. 44, "How can ye believe, who seek honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?"—Bitterness of spirit, which cannot digest the gospel command, of doing good for evil: Tit. iii. 3, "For

we also ourselves were sometime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another."—Reigning love to the pleasures of this world, and covetousness: Ezek. xxxiii. 31, "And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." But the gracious soul's obedience is universal; all such in so far sincerely aim at every known duty, approve the holy law in every point; desiring their spirits to be conformed to it, not it to be brought down to them; lamenting from the heart their shortcoming in all points.

3. The inside Christian's obedience is son-like obedience, the other is servile and slavish. The highest principle with the hypocrite is fear of punishment, and hope of reward, Hos. x. 11; their highest end is themselves, Hos. x. 1. Jehu professed zeal for the Lord, but in effect it was but zeal for a kingdom. The inside Christian serves God as a son does his father.—Prompted by love to him, next to his command: 1 Tim. i. 5, "Now, the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned."—Leaning on him for strength to perform his duty: Col. iii. 17, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."—Aiming at his honour: 1 Cor. x. 31, "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

From this learn, that those are inevitably exposed to death, who come not the length of the outward duties of religion, of mercy towards their neighbours, or of piety towards God. Lay this to heart, ye unrighteous, ye slighters of religion, prayerless persons, &c. Ye come not even the length of some who will fall short, and never see heaven. O! if those who do all these things be lost, what will become of you?—Ye that even come that length, lay no stress upon it, it will be but a broken reed to trust to. Duties are by no means sufficient confidences: nor in themselves, without internals joined to them, can they even be evidences of your safety. Examine not only what ye do, but how ye do it, for this last is that to which God chiefly looks.—I now come to the

IV. And last proposition, That he is not a true Christian, who has inside religion only in the letter of it, but he who also has it in its spirituality. We have pursued the nominal Christian through his outside religion, but we may not leave him here; for, as an hypocrite may go farther than mere externals, so the text pursues him for discovery, even in internals in the letter.—For explaining which, I observe,

1. That a man may carry his religion into internals, and yet be but a Christian in the letter. He may do and have that in religion which no eye but God sees or can see, and yet be no true Christian: Jer. xvii. 9, 10, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." A person may form such a fine thread of hypocrisy, as to beguile every eye but the all-seeing eye: Jer. iii. 10, "And yet for all this, her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the Lord." Do not think that all hypocrisy is gross dissimulation, or yet that all a hypocrite's religion lies only in his outside, and in nothing within.—For,

(1.) A natural conscience may check for heart-sins, and sins that no eye sees but God's, Rom. ii. 15, "Which shew the work of the law written on their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean time accusing, or else excusing, one another;" and consequently must press to inward duties, according to the light. Hence there may be sorrow and grief for what is hid from all the world; since the conscience perceives that God sees it, and that he will write his indignation on it. This fire has burned in many an unsanctified breast, yet it behoved it to have a vent, though to their own shame and loss.

(2.) An unsanctified desire of salvation, in the way of the covenant of works, may carry a man to internals in religion: Rom. x. 3, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."—The covenant of works is engraved on man's heart naturally, and under the influence of it a man may do his utmost to conform to the letter of the law, in the inward as well as outward duties of it. Observe the case of the young man in Matth. xix. 16—20. It is no rare thing to see men eager to purchase heaven by their works.

(3.) Light may be strong, and kept strong by the common operations of the Holy Spirit, in an unholy heart. Thus, Balaam durst not entertain a thought of cursing Israel; though he would fain have gained the wages of unrighteousness, if his light would have suffered him. Our Lord Christ breaks up the outer door of our understanding often while the inner remains shut. This cannot miss to have some bond on the heart, as well as on the outer man.

(4.) Even in the internals of religion, there is a letter and a spirit; there is the body or matter of the thing, and the soul and spirit of it lying in the right manner of doing it. The former is not

beyond the power of nature, but the latter is; and therefore a hypocrite may come the length of the letter of internals of religion. He may have desires of good; Prov. xiii. 4, "The soul of the sluggard desireth," &c., though not holy desires; so in other cases.

2. The true Christian has inside religion, not in the letter only, but in the spirituality thereof: Phil. iii. 3, "We—worship God in the spirit, and—have no confidence in the flesh." He does not satisfy himself with the thing itself, but labours to get it, and maintain it as of the right stamp, such as God will approve. Here lies sincerity, that ornament of all religion, or rather the spirit and life of all, John i. 47. Now, this spirituality consists in two things.

(1.) In the graciousness of the principle, 1 Tim. i. 5. Their inward religion is the fruit of their new nature influenced by the Lord the Spirit; it is natural, and not violent or forced out by terrors, or from necessity, as screening them from the wrath of God. The new nature makes it their absolute choice, in whatever circumstances they may be: whereas it is the choice of others, only because they cannot otherwise act safely.—It consists,

(2.) In the holiness of their aim: their chief aim is to please the Lord, Col. i. 10. The stress of their salvation is laid on the obedience of Christ, not their own, whether outward or inward; and hence their aim in all their duties, is not to please themselves, but him who has called them to be partakers of his glory. The hypocrite is servile in his aims to please God, as he is mercenary for his own profit, so that himself, and not God, is his chief end; but the sincere soul acts like a son, by virtue of the spirit of adoption.—From all this we may learn,

That this shews they are not true Christians, whose religion lies all in externals, and have no concern about their hearts, Matth. xxiii. 25. A whited sepulchre is the emblem of a hypocrite, not of a true Christian. Persons also may be at much pains inwardly, who yet never come the length of the spirit of religion. What, then, will become of these, whose case is entirely confined to the outward man?—Let those who carry religion inwardly also examine well, what are the principles and ends they act from, lest their inside religion be found a spiritless, lifeless corpse of religion, the mere product of their own exertions. Such may perceive whether or not they have the spirit of religion, by,

1. Their endeavouring to approve themselves to the Lord, as an all-seeing holy God, not in some things only, but in all things, Col. i. 10. Being content to know the whole word of God as to duty, and what they know not to be discovered to them, in order to their setting about it, Job xxxiv. 32; Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24. They will know it by,

2. Their endeavouring to purge their inward, as well as their outward religion, of all carnal and selfish motives, principles, and ends, John iii. 21. Self is an insinuating thing, and much of our spirituality lies in persons endeavouring to be spiritual in what they do. So short length do most come, we must be concerned to be purged from hypocrisy; it is a good sign with those who are unsatisfied with their performance of duty, and are lamenting that they are not spiritual in it, Rom. vii. 22, 23.—They will know it,

3. By being denied to their outward, and also their inward religion, Phil. iii. Though they endeavour to do all as if they were to gain heaven by doing, yet they renounce all in point of confidence before the Lord, as naked and bare. This is a good sign, Matth v. 3.

In pursuance of this point touching inside religion, I shall offer the following observations touching the hypocrite's attainments in this respect, and at the same time shew wherein the true Christian goes beyond him.

1. A person may be under heavy exercise of soul after the commission of some sin, especially a gross sin, and yet be but a Christian in the letter. This is manifest in the case of Judas. Though there are some sins, which every unsanctified heart makes no bones of yet there are some which may stick in the throat even of a person void of the grace of God; nay, more, in this exercise of soul there may be, (1.) Great restlessness and anxiety of mind, which the person cannot divert, as he was wont to do. (2.) Indignation at himself, for doing as he has done. (3.) A taking shame to himself before men, by a plain and open confession of guilt, Matth. xxvii. 3, 4. Lastly, Strong resolutions to guard against that sin in all time to come. Thus, Exod. ix. 27, in which Pharaoh was morally serious, speaking as he thought in the time.—But here there are four things wanting, which are to be found in the exercises of true Christians after their falls into sin.—There is,

(1.) Kindly humiliation of soul before the Lord. The Christian in spirit sees not only an evil in sin which affrights him, but a loathsomeness in it which turns his stomach at it, as being contrary to God's holy nature and will: Job xlii. 5, 6, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. He owns himself unworthy of God's grace, and casts himself down at the Lord's feet, stopping his mouth from quarrelling with God, however he dispose of him, Psalm. li. 4.

(2.) The dishonour done to God, and the grieving his Spirit, is what does most touch the heart of the true Christian: Psalm li. 4, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil

in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." The consideration of God's glorious majesty, his loving-kindness and gracious benefits towards the person, furnish a quiver of arrows to pierce his heart, and he calls himself beast and fool for thus requiting the Lord.

(3.) No peace will that person have, but that which God himself speaks, and what flows from the application of the Redeemer's blood, Rom. i. 5. Others may be for peace at any rate, build up their peace on their sorrows, repentance, and confession; but no peace for the true Christian, till he get it under the covert of the blood of Christ, Heb. ix. 14.

(4.) Their exercises under their trials drive them out of themselves to Christ for sanctification: Psalm li. 10, 11, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy Spirit from me;" whereas trials drive others into themselves, as resolved, that if God, for Christ's sake, will but pardon their sin, they will see to their own holiness of life; after which, in some, they issue in faithless blind vows against such and such sins, not sensible of their own weakness, and not fleeing to Christ under a sense of it. But the true Christian will be equally concerned for sanctification of his spirit, as justification of his person by blood, knowing he equally needs both.—In like manner,

2. A person may have a great struggle in himself against sin, and against temptation to it, and yet be but only a Christian in the letter. It is a dangerous mistake to think, that every inward struggle against sin is the combat between the flesh and the spirit. Herod had no small struggle with himself, before he could yield to the beheading of John, Matth. xiv. 9. Pilate also, before he could yield to the condemning of Christ. Nay, a hypocrite may not only have this struggle, but may carry the day against the temptation, in so much that he will not yield to it. This is clear in the case of Balaam, when all Balak's entreaties and rewards could not engage him to curse Israel.—There are five things wherein the true Christian goes beyond the hypocrite in this respect.—As,

(1.) His struggle arises from the new nature, with which he is endowed; he has an habitual bent to holiness, and an aversion to evil: Gal. v. 17, "For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." The hypocrite's struggle does arise only from a slavish fear, or at best from a civil disposition, which is easily overcome, as being but a part of the old nature, and so reaches but to some things.—Which brings me to observe,

(2.) That a true Christian's struggle is against all sin, every thing which is discovered by him to be sin, of whatever sort it be, whether it be of those which are more gross or more subtile, those that are brought to the light by some external action, or those that are in the soul or spirit only: thus the psalmist: Psalm cxix. 128, "Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way." Hence the struggle of the true Christian is against unbelief, the actings and workings of self in the various shapes which it assumes, and against predominant idols. But the struggle of others is confined to the grosser kinds of sin, and is never taken up against all known sin, but only against some one lust or other, which has often at length a respite given to, or rather league concluded with it. A hypocrite gives evidence that the cause of this war is not a natural antipathy, as in the true Christian, but an accidental quarrel.

(3.) The Christian's struggle tends to the mortification and extirpation of sin, the plucking up of it by the roots, the destroying of the tree with its fruit, Gal. v. 24. It tends to no less than the perfection of sanctification, and the utter abolition of sin as the cause of this war. This the new nature lusteth and longeth after, and cannot be satisfied to lay down the sword while there is a Canaanite in the land; and since it is not obtained in this life, the war is continued till death make the sword drop, and victory is obtained: Phil. iii. 13, 14, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The other is not so violent, but strives only to repress certain lusts which are troublesome or dishonourable.

(4.) The Christian's struggle prevails, to the constituting of the habitual course of his life, a holy course. This is the chief strain in which he runs on, although mixed with many slips, John iii. 9, 10; so that he has that noble testimony with the apostle, "that with simplicity, and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world," 2 Cor. i. 12. But the other still lives a life habitually unholy.

(5.) The Christian's struggle is betwixt a new and gracious quality in the will, and the old corrupt inclinations, its neighbours there, whose reign is broken, though their molestation still continue; Gal. v. 17, "For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." But the struggle of the hypocrite is betwixt his will and his partially enlightened con-

science, which takes up the cudgels against the corrupt will, and fights against it with the fire and terror of a holy law; or, at most, between a slight inclination of the will, and the reigning corrupt inclinations.—There is farther to be considered,

3. That a person may be in great concern about his state, and yet be but a Christian only in the letter. How is it possible that men living under the clear light of the gospel, can but have some touches of this? Felix was so troubled with it, that he trembled, Acts xxiv. 25. Simon Magus, Acts viii. 24. Conversion begins here in the work of conviction; but oftentimes it stops here, and goes no farther, Hos. xiii. 13. But I will say more than this: a person may have such an exercise on his spirit about his state, and it may be carried on from one step to another, in so much that, in his own eyes, and the eyes of others, it may be taken for the work of conversion, and yet after all he be a Christian only in the letter, and not in the spirit.—Thus, for instance,

(1.) He may have a law-work on his spirit, and yet may be no true Christian. Had not Pharaoh and Felix deep conviction? and was not Judas stung and pricked at the heart under the sense of his guilt? Legal qualms of conscience may fill a man with terrors, sorrow, and anxiety, on account of sin, who notwithstanding is never brought to Christ. The apostle tells us, Gal. iv. 24, that "the law gendereth to bondage." The covenant of works bringeth forth children; but they are only bond-children, that is, slaves, not sons, in their obedience to God. There are many pangs of conscience in the world, which, though they may be taken for pangs of the new birth, are nothing other than pangs of the second death. The matter lies here: either the wound which the hypocrite gets, is over deep, as is the case when it drives the person to utter despair, as it did Judas, so that he neither closed, nor pretended to close, with Christ; or else it is not deep enough, so that the work is marred, being but superficial; and he is like the person who, without a foundation, built his house upon the sand, and the storm, whenever it arose, swept it away, Luke vi. 48. Betwixt these two extremes, in the middle way, the work is carried on for making a Christian in spirit, and not in the letter only. The case of utter despair is manifest; but to shew that deepness of the soul's wound, which issues in conversion, which is wanting in that which only issues in a person's becoming a Christian in the letter, consider the nature of that wound which is given in the work of grace.

[1.] It brings the soul to be content to part with all sin, and to take Christ on any terms: Hos. xiv. 2, "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord; say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive

us graciously; so will we render the calves of our lips." Acts ix. 6, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" said Paul, trembling and astonished. The man is content to expose the right-eye sin, that the Lord may pluck it out, and the right hand, that it may be cut off. But the hypocrite, with all his soul-exercise, is never brought this length. There is still some one bias of the heart or other he is never content to have corrected. There is always some idol of jealousy to be spared, some particular or other in Christ's terms of salvation to which he cannot submit, Mark x. 21.

[2.] The wound goes to the root of sin in the soul, namely, the sin of our nature; Jer. iv. 3, 4, "For thus saith the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your hearts, ye men of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem." He that is only humbled for the sins of a wicked life, and some particular lusts in the heart, which is the utmost of the hypocrite's attainment, in him the serpent's heel may be bruised, but not his head. The sin of our nature is the great reigning sin, and in the work of grace the Lord strikes at that particularly, and makes the soul feel the intolerable weight of it: Rom. vii. 24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But as long as heart-corruption is untouched, as the man recovers his peace, his sin will recover its strength.

(3.) The wound brings the soul to a sense of its absolute need of Christ, and his whole salvation, for justification and also for sanctification. This is the issue of kindly soul-exercise, namely, that thus a person becomes poor in spirit, which the exercise of the hypocrite never brings him to: Matth. v. 3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Right soul-exercise carries a man out of himself to Christ for righteousness, roots up his confidence in himself, in his best duties and dispositions, &c., breaks the marriage between him and the law, that he may be married to Christ, without anything whatever to recommend him: Gal. ii. 19, 20, "For I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." He also depends on Christ for sanctification, being persuaded of his utter inability to do any good: Rom. vii. 18, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." And under the sense of this, the soul lies down at the Lord's feet, as in Jer. xxxi. 18, "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God."

(2.) A person may have a common illumination in the knowledge of Christ, and yet be but a Christian only in the letter: Heb. vi. 4, "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, &c., if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance." They may have such knowledge of Christ in his natures, person and offices, as may enable them even to teach others, and edify them in the knowledge of Christ, and yet be no true Christians themselves. Such were Judas, Demas, and thousands of others in other ages of the Church. Great gifts may be without grace; and there may be much heat, where there is no sanctified warmth.—But there is a saving illumination, communicated to all true converts, of which others never partake: John iv. 10, "Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." And it has these three characters.

(1.) Saving illumination discovers to the soul such a suitableness in the mystery of Christ to the divine perfections and the sinner's case, that the soul heartily falls in with, and acquiesces in the glorious device of salvation by infinite wisdom: 1 Cor. i. 24, "But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." They see that there is nothing wanting in it, which is necessary to promote God's honour, or to answer their own miserable case, but that it has a perfect suitableness to both; so that their awakened consciences may find complete rest there; and hence they lay themselves wholly for rest upon it, while the consciences of others, being awakened, and their minds being still blinded, they never go to him only for rest, but at best mix their own righteousness with his, and dare not trust to his righteousness alone.—Saving illumination,

(2.) Discovers such a transcendent glory and excellence in him, as that the soul is made content and determined to part with all for him: Phil. iii. 8, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellence of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." It is a sad, but common question in the hearts, though, it may be, not in the mouths, of unrenewed sinners, Song v. 9, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?" Certain it is, that the most refined hypocrite has always something that to him is dearer than Christ, and which has more of his heart than He has. But the soul enlightened with the light of life, beholds that in him which

darkens all created excellence, as the rising sun makes the stars hide their heads; so that they will part with all lawful, as well as unlawful enjoyments, to win him, Luke xiv. 26.

[3.] Saving illumination discovers such a fulness in him, that the heart takes up its everlasting rest in him: Psal. lxxiii. 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." The returning prodigal sees bread enough and to spare in his father's house; and the true convert sees a rest to his heart, as well as for his conscience, in Christ, so that he is brought to be content with him alone, as seeing him to be all in all. But this the hypocrite never comes to; the divided heart must have Christ, and also some lust or other, or else no contentment.

(3.) A person may give a consent to the covenant, and in some sort close with the Lord in his covenant, while, after all, he may be only a Christian in the letter; and thus the work of conversion may seem to be completed, as it would really be if they were sincere in so doing. A hypocrite may expressly and solemnly covenant with God, by word or by writ, and thus engage to be the Lord's. This is evident from the practice of the Israelites: Exod. xiv. 8, "And all the people answered and said, All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord."—Here we may observe, how full they are in their consent and engagement, "All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do." See also Exod. xx. 19. But mark the Lord's own verdict on this covenanting; Deut. v. 29, "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and their children for ever!" Not only may all this be classed among the externals of religion, but I shall add, for illustration, that persons may be morally serious in their consent to the covenant, that is, thinking and resolving in the time to do as they say. Moral seriousness is opposed to gross dissimulation, which there was no place for here, Deut. v. 24. Yet it may be where there is no sincerity, Psal. lxxviii. 37. Of the same people it is said, "For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant." Hypocrites, in this case, are like those who, out of mere simplicity, and ignorance of the worth of a thing, offer to buy it; but if they really knew what it could not be sold under, they would never once bid for it.—They may also consent to the covenant out of a real sense of their sin and misery, and a conviction of their need of a Mediator, as in Exod. xx. 19, "And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." There was the mountain on fire, for a tribunal; the voice of a trumpet, summoning the criminals;

terrible thunders, to pronounce the sentence of death against them. This filled them with horror and fear of death, and shewed them the need of a Mediator. But there are three things in which the Christian in spirit goes beyond the Christian in the letter, in this point,

[1.] He engages freely and heartily to the Lord in his whole covenant. The hypocrite is but dragged and forced into it, when the matter is seriously considered. They are not a willing people: Psalm. lxxviii. 34, 36, 37, "When he slew them, then they sought him; and they returned and inquired early after God. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant." I doubt not but a hypocrite may be very hearty in his consent to receive the comforts of the covenant: Matth. xiii. 20, 21, "But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it. Yet he hath not root in himself, but dureth for a while." But if he consider the duties of the covenant, there he sticks, and can come no other way to the whole covenant, but as he is dragged: Rom. viii. 7, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

When the Spirit enters into a person's heart, he takes such hold of it, that the person is overcome by grace into willingness. Thus it is said, Jer. xxxi. 3, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Then the person pours out his heart like water: Psalm lxii. 8, "Pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us." Terror may begin the work, but love crowns it: Hos. ii. 14, "Therefore, behold I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her."

(2.) While the person's heart consents to the covenant with the Lord, it is divorced from sin; but the hypocrite consents to the covenant with a heart glued to his lusts: Psalm xlv. 10, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father's house." It is an ill-made second marriage, where there is neither death nor divorce from the first husband; and this is the cause of apostacy, men going back to their lusts, because they never freely parted with them. What makes a man and his lusts one, is, the greedy hold the heart takes of them; the heart cleaves to them: Jer. viii. 5, "Why, then, is the people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return." But the bond is loosed by divine grace, and their liking is turned to loathing; though sin cleaves to them, they cleave not to it: Rom. vii. 21, 22, "I find then a law, that when I

would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man." In which case, it is not only put out of the life, but out of the heart.

(3.) In covenanting with God, the person resigns himself absolutely to the Lord, the hypocrite never without reserves. The sincere soul absolutely gives up itself, (1.) To the yoke of his commandments, Psalm cxix. 128, "Therefore, I esteem all thy commandments, concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way." But there is some one duty or other the hypocrite's heart cannot digest, as in Mark x. 21. (2.) The soul gives up itself to the providential will of God, Luke xiv. 26. He is content to bear his cross, as well as to wear his crown; but there is always something in the cross to which the hypocrite cannot submit.

(4.) And *lastly*, A person may be in the exercise of religious duties, may be much enlarged and affected, and yet only a Christian in the letter, Heb. vi. 4. Many get a taste of gospel-benefits, who never digest them, this taste arising only from common operations of the Spirit on an unrenewed heart; and a person may, at a time, get another heart, who never gets a new heart. Thus it was with Saul, 1 Sam. x. 9.—As to this, I would observe,

1. In the general, that a hypocrite may have a mighty enlargement in duties, and be much affected in them. That there may be a great stir and motion among the affections, while the stony heart does yet remain, is plain from the case of the stony-ground hearers, Matth. xiii. 20, and the many instances of joys and sorrows raised in unrenewed hearts by the word. Many lay a great deal of weight on this, that they are not always alike in duties: Sometimes they are bound up, sometimes enlarged; sometimes they drive heavily in them, sometimes they have a great deal of comfort and pleasure in them. But, do not such swallow down this as an evidence of the grace of God without examination?—To understand this, consider, that there is an enlargement in the exercise of a gift, as well as in the exercise of a grace; and the one may be mistaken for the other, 2 Cor. ii. 13—15. Thus also God both enlarged and straitened king Saul in gifts: And as the gifts of others, well exercised in holy things, may greatly delight a man, as in Ezek. xxxiii. 32, "And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument;" so much more may the exercise of one's own gift with ease and readiness, delight the person's self.—Consider also, that the power of a deluded fancy may produce this, as in the stony ground hearers, Matth. xiii. 20. As a man may have a great deal of pleasure in a dream, or in a misconception, so a deceived heart may make a person feed very sweetly

upon ashes, and never suspect that there is a lie in his right hand, Isa. xliv. 20. Do we not read of a fire of men's own kindling, which, though it may mightily comfort them for a time, yet ends in sorrow and darkness, Isa. i. 11.—Consider, in a word, that there are common influences of the Spirit which are not sanctifying, which may produce a mighty commotion among the affections, Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6. Even signal providences will have this effect on unrenewed hearts, whether they be in mercy or in judgment: Psalm lxxviii. 34. When he slew them, then they sought him; and they returned and inquired early after God." These things come like a summer-shower, which wets the surface of the earth, and makes every channel run for a while, but is quickly again dried up.—Now, the difference between the Christian in the spirit in his gracious enlargement in duties, and the Christian in the letter in his delusive enlargements in duty, may be seen in these two particulars:—

(1.) Gracious enlargements tend always to the killing and mortifying of self, that grand competitor with Christ: 1 Chron. xxix. 14, "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee." The hypocrite's enlargements feed and nourish it, swelling the heart with pride and self-conceit: Isa. lviii. 3, "Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast, ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours." The more a person is graciously enlarged in duties, the more his sinfulness, weakness, wants, and nothingness appear, notwithstanding all his meltings, mournings, humiliations, &c. But the hypocrite, the more he is enlarged, appears to himself the more worthy that Christ should do great things for him; and he becomes the less self-denied.

(2.) Gracious enlargements are sanctifying; they promote holiness in heart and life: Zech. xii. 10, "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." They are a burning, as well as a shining light, and make persons more tender in all moral duties to God and man. If one has been taken into the temple of God in duties, it will appear about him in the substantials of morality. He will fear sin more, and be more exercised to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men. But delusive enlargements

have not this effect. On the contrary, they readily leave people more proud, peevish, and selfish, often making them such sons of Belial, that a person cannot speak to them; and never strike at inward beloved lusts to mortify them.

2. But to be more particular,

(1.) A hypocrite may be much affected with sorrow for sin in his duties. All mourners are not true mourners, Zech. vii. 3. One may hear the word, or pour out a prayer with wet cheeks, and yet have a whole heart, a heart far from being broken for sin. Esau was in a flood of tears, seeking the blessing. Many times, where water goes out in their case, wind enters in. It is not always humbling grace that produces tears. Some are of soft dispositions, and easily wrought upon by a melancholy object, without any efficacy of grace, like the daughters of Jerusalem, Luke xxiii. 27, and downwards. Some, of most rugged dispositions, because their affections are vehement in any case, may be thus touched and affected, and yet there be nothing more than the product of nature. Thus, when David shewed him mercy, even Saul lifted up his voice, and wept, 1 Sam. xxiv. 16. But the difference betwixt the Christian and the hypocrite lies here, (1.) That the chief ground of the true Christian's sorrow for sin is, the offence and dishonour done to a holy gracious God, as an ingenuous child is moved with his father's displeasure and dishonour: Psalm li. 4, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." But the hypocrite's chief ground is selfish, because of the evils to which he has thereby exposed himself, whether in time or eternity. (2.) The hypocrite's sorrow is soon over; it is but a flash, and away: and he goes back again, if not to the same sins, yet to others no less offensive to God. His sorrow never goes the length to loose the bonds of wickedness; Isa. lviii. 5, 6, "Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?" It is not so with the godly: Lam. iii. 49, 50, "Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission: till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven." Their sorrow for sin is habitual, because the body of sin still remains, and this sorrow influences them to war against all sin.

(2.) A hypocrite may have a kind of love to God and Christ, and a desire after grace and good things. Hence Paul prays for grace

to "them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," Eph. vi. 24. The Christian in the letter may say, "Lord, evermore give us this bread," John vi. 34, and join the foolish virgins in their desire to partake of the oil of the wise. But the difference betwixt the Christian and the hypocrite here lies:—

[1.] That a hypocrite may love God as his benefactor, as one who does him good every day, and from whose hands he looks for good in time coming, either for time or for eternity, Mal. iii. 1. This is to love God for one's self. But the true Christian loves him, not only because of his benefits, but because of his lovely nature, his perfect holiness, truth, hatred of sin, &c. This is to love God for himself: Psalm xxx. 4, "Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness." And this the unholy heart can never do, Rom. viii. 7, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God." Now, they that love God thus, they love his image, wherever it appears, and particularly in the holy law even where it strikes against that sin which most easily besets them: Rom. vii. 22, "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man."—The difference lies,

[2.] That they may desire grace, for its necessity in order to save them, but not for its intrinsic beauty and likeness to the Lord: Matth. v. 7, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." It is the chief thing the true Christian desires, grace to be holy, as well as grace to be justified and pardoned: Psalm xxvii. 4, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple."—The difference lies,

Lastly, That a hypocrite may have much joy and delight in the duties of religion; so had the stony ground hearers, Matth. xiii. 20.—Isa. lviii. 2, "Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinances of their God; they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God." There may be delusive raptures of joy, as well as unsound floods of sorrow. I shewed very lately the difference betwixt genuine joy and these delusive raptures. True joy riseth orderly, after a preceding rending effect on the heart, &c.; delusive joy more quickly, &c.*—I now come,

III. To make some short improvement.—I have endeavoured to lay before you the differences betwixt the hypocrite and the sincere Christian; and from the whole, I think you may carry away these lessons.—We may hence see,

* See Catechetical Sermons on Rom. v. 2.

1. That it is no easy thing to be a Christian. A parcel of external performances do not make a Christian, nay nor even internal things also, without the genuine spirit of duties, performances, and attainments: that the great thing which makes the difference is, not so much what is done, as how it is done, the principles, ends, manner, &c. of doing it.—We may learn,

2. That a man may go a very great length in religion, and notwithstanding be naught in God's esteem. A person may look so like a true Christian, that he may deceive both saints and sinners like him who is said to have made an image with such motion, that others thought it had life. Nay, I know not but he may deceive the devil himself: Jer. xvii. 9, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" like him who is said to have painted grapes so lively, that the birds came and picked at them. He may deceive himself like the Laodiceans, and go to death with the delusion, like the foolish virgins.—We may learn,

3. That however far the hypocrite goes, the true Christian goes beyond him; and therefore we must not, we ought not, to satisfy ourselves as to the point of sincerity, unless there be something in us which is not to be found in hypocrites. And therefore I exhort you to put yourselves to the trial. Try yourselves whether you be in Christ or not, whether you be sincere Christians or not.—Consider,

(1.) True religion is very rare at all times: Matth. vii. 14, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." The miserable decay and untenderness among all sorts of persons, shew it to be especially rare at this time, in which we may say, "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men," Psalm xii. 1. —Consider,

(2.) That we are like to see trying times, in which the Lord will set his furnace in Zion. God has appeared often seasonably and wonderfully for our deliverance; but the generation is not bettered, but rather growing worse and worse in all points. This is a forerunner of a fearful stroke. Now, Sirs, a shew of religion may do in a time of ease and peace, but when that trial comes, it will be hard to bear up without the reality.—Consider,

(3.) That death and judgment will try us all. We may put off the trial as we will for a time, there is however no shifting of it altogether. God will not be mocked.—Consider,

Lastly, That it will be a terrible disappointment to be awakened out of dreams of heaven, by falling into hell. It will be no time to seek oil, when the Bridegroom is come, and hath shut the door.

We have in view an ordinance that calls to self-examination: 1 Cor. xi. 28, "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." Therefore bestir yourselves, and consider your state. Study the spirituality of religion, that you may thus approve yourselves to the heart-searching God. Amen.

THE STATUTE-LAW OF DISCIPLESHIP.*

SERMON XXXIII.

LUKE xiv. 26,

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

He is a fool who joins himself to any society, before he has weighed with himself how he can comply with the laws and rules of that society. In vain do we propose to be a disciple to any person, if we are not disposed, to submit to his discipline. Man is born like a wild ass's colt, naturally untractable and unteachable; the Son of God has set up his school amongst us; many who externally belong to it stand at a distance from him, as rude and unpolished by grace as when they first came to it. There is a solemn and awful entry into the school of Christ before us, and it cannot be unsuitable, especially on such a season as this, to stand and hear, out of the mouth of the great Master, the necessary qualifications of all such as will be reckoned his disciples indeed. This we have in the text.—In which there is observable,

1. A case supposed; and there are two things in it. For this case, though the case of many, is like the legs of the lame, which are not equal.—In it, first, there is a fair profession. The man cometh to Christ, not in the way of believing on him, as this word is often used, the expression here can by no means be thus explained; but in the way of an outward profession, joining himself with his followers, taking on him the name of his party. The occasion of the words clears this. Multitudes went with him, and they were ready to value themselves because they kept good com-

* Delivered at Selkirk, Saturday, Oct. 11, 1712.

pany. The Lord turns to them, and tells them, that it was another thing to be a disciple of his than most of them took it to be. He lays the matter so plainly before them, as would make it easy to conclude, that most who followed him now would leave him afterwards; and that when it came to the trying pinch, he would have but a thin backing; therefore they should in time consider what they are doing.—In the case there is, next, a foul and false heart. The man comes to Christ, and brings not his heart with him, but leaves it at home with his father or mother, &c. or keeps it still hugging and embracing his dear self, his life, so that he cannot embrace Christ, more than a man can take both heaven and earth in his arms at once. Christ must be dearer to his disciples than what is dearest to them in the world. The dearest persons are father, mother, &c. The dearest thing is life. That which makes this case so bad is, that they are dearer to the man than Christ. He hates not his father, mother, &c. He who taught us in the law, to love our neighbour as ourselves, does not contradict this here, but speaks out what was implied there, that we must neither love our neighbour nor ourselves, as God. It is not an absolute, but a comparative hatred which is here meant; that is, a less love: Gen. xxix. 31, "And when the Lord saw that Leah was hated:" that is, less loved than Rachel. Similar instances occur, as in Deut. xxi. 15; John xii. 25. And thus it is explained, Matth. x. 37, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." A man must leave father and mother to cleave to his wife; but he must leave his wife, yea, and his life also, to cleave to Christ. Levi gave a practical commentary on this text, Deut. xxxiii. 9, "Who said unto his father, and to his mother, I have not seen, neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children; for they observed thy word, and kept thy covenant." And so did that disciple-like resolution of Jerome: "If my father should stand before me," says he, "my mother hang upon me, my brethren press about me, I would break through my brethren, throw down my father, tread under feet my mother, to cleave to Jesus Christ." So said a certain Dutch schoolmaster, being asked, if he loved not his wife and children? "Yes," says he, "if all the world were gold, and mine to dispose of, I would give it all to live with them, though but in a prison; yet is my soul and my Lord Christ dearer than all." But perhaps this is only the attainment of few. Mistake it not, but hear,

2. Christ's verdict upon the case, and venture not to distinguish where the law makes no distinction: "If any man come to me, and hate not, &c., he cannot be my disciple." Be he or she who

they will, they cannot be Christ's disciples, if Christ be not dearer than what is dearest to them in a world. Nominal disciples they may be indeed, but real they cannot be, they cannot bear afflictions for Christ, because they want such affections to him as are necessary to make them go in the strait and narrow way which leads unto life.—From this subject I would take this

DOCTRINE, That no man can be a true disciple of Christ, to whom Christ is not dearer than what is dearest to him in the world.

For illustrating this subject, I shall,

I. Speak to the nature of this necessary qualification of a true disciple of Christ.

II. Confirm the doctrine of the text.

III. Offer some reasons why Christ is dearer to his true disciples, than what is dearest to them in the world. And,

IV. Conclude with some improvement.

We are then,

I. To speak to the nature of this necessary qualification of a true disciple of Christ.—There are in it,

1. An esteem of Christ above all: Psalm xlv. 2, "Thou art fairer than the children of men, grace is poured into thy lips; therefore God hath blessed thee for ever." Christ is the highest and most glorious object in the practical judgment of all his true disciples: Psalm lxxiii. 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." They do not only think him the best portion, considering things in the general, in which sense he has even the commendation of those who slight him; but they look upon him as best for them, in whatever circumstances they may be; this is the character of a true disciple: Matth. xi. 6, "And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." As the sparkling stars hide their heads when the sun ariseth, so all things in the world lose their lustre when the glory of God appeareth to them, shining in the face of Jesus; though to others there is in him no beauty.

2. The heart renounceth its property in all things of the world, in the day of its closing with Jesus Christ. As a rebellious son, turned out of his father's house into an uninhabited land, takes that as his property which he falls upon by the right of first finding; but when he has access to return, he quits it, that he may enjoy his father's estate: so Adam and his children being driven out of paradise, and banished from the presence and enjoyment of the Lord himself, they take up with what created comforts they stumble upon in their blind rambling through the wilderness of this world, as

their own portion; but returning and taking Christ, they part with these, their souls returning into their quiet rest. The natural man, being alienated from the life of God, takes a dead hold of created things, as suited to his corrupt state, and therefore his own by choice; hence so many carnal "mys," but not a word of "my God" amongst them: Hos. ii. 5, "She said, I will go after my lovers that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink." This is very unlike to Psalm xviii. 1, 2, "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower." Now, when the soul begins to live, it quits that greedy grip of carnal things, and begins to fall off from the world; that bond of iniquity which bound the heart and the world together being broken; so that the disciple of Christ looks on all he has as no more his own.

3. The soul resigns all to the Lord, lays all down at the Lord's feet, to be disposed of as he will: 1 Sam. iii. 18, "Eli said, it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." 2 Sam. xv. 26, "David said, Behold, here am I, let the Lord do with me as seemeth good unto him." If the Lord have use for his comforts in the world, he, and all that are his, are for his part at his service. Though they were his before, he now makes a free-will offering of them all to the Lord; so that, in very deed, all that a true disciple of Christ has, are dedicated things, consecrated to God. He may not, he dare not, revoke the grant; they must be used, as God who is the proprietor doth direct, whose will must not be disputed in the disposal of his own; they can be no more for profane, but holy uses. And if, through the prevalence of corruption, he has put his hand to that which is not holy, Christ's discipline will make him bring it back with the tear in his eye. Never a soul closes with Christ aright, that layeth not all its enjoyments, even life itself, at his feet.

4. The soul accepts of Christ for, and instead of the things resigned. God does not require us, nor will the heart ever part with these, but for a better: Matth. xiii. 45, 46, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." The man takes Christ instead of father, mother, and all things; for it is impossible that man can be self-sufficient. The heart of man is an empty, hungry thing, that must needs have something to feed upon; and let men ply their hearts with the utmost diligence, they will still find it impossible to draw the husks of the world out of their hearts, unless something better is set before them. They must see heaven, before they will be drawn from earth;

therefore, the great transaction between Christ and the soul is held out under the notion of buying, in which a man does indeed in one sense, namely, as to his portion, give away his money: but he obtains something instead of it, which is better to him than his money. He gets Christ, the pearl of great price, the one thing needful.

5. The soul is disposed to part with them, when the Lord calls for them; has an habitual readiness to part with them for Christ. It is true, indwelling corruption is ready to hold the grip too fast, even when the Lord calls for a delivery; yet every soul closing with Christ has an honest resolution to part with all for him actually, when he shall please to put them to the trial. The grace of God looseth them at the root, when it first comes into the soul, rooting and grounding them in love to Christ; which root of the righteous shall never be moved.

6. There is in the soul a new power of living, without them, on Jesus Christ; a life which is an absolute mystery to every Christless soul: John vi. 57, "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." If in this spiritual bargain they have quit with their money, on the purchase made, they can live without it, else would they never have quit with it. Though all temporal things fail them, yet can they rejoice in the Lord as their portion, and joy in the God of their salvation, Hab. iii. 18. If father and mother should leave them, they can satisfy themselves in the Lord's taking them up. If they should lose all relations for him, his relation to them is, in their eyes, more than sufficient to make up the loss. If they should not know where to hide their heads, or how to get food in a hiding-place, he is to them, not only a refuge for protection, but a portion for maintenance, Psalm cxlii. 4, 5. If all their substance should be taken from them, the Almighty shall be the gold and silver of their strength, Job xxii. 25. Yea, though natural life should go in his cause, himself is their life, a life which cannot be taken from them; for, Col. iii. 4, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we appear with him in glory."—We now proceed,

II. To confirm the doctrine of the text, or shew, that no man can be a true disciple of Christ, to whom Christ is not dearer than what is dearest to him in the world.—For this purpose, consider,

1. That the soul cannot truly lay hold on Christ, but it must of necessity part with the world. The embracing of Christ infers naturally the loosing our hold of the world: Matth. vi. 24, "No man can serve two masters. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." We may as soon grasp heaven and earth at once in our arms, as fix on Christ, and not loose our hold from all things besides him. If you

would look up to the heavens, you must look away from the earth. The world is the term from which Christ calls us: Song iv. 8, "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon." Men may keep his company, with the world under their feet, but not with the world in their heart.—Consider,

2. It is impossible that the love of God, and the love of the world, (the persons and things of the world), can at the same time be predominant in the heart. One of them must of necessity be uppermost. If the love of God be predominant, then it will command the love of all worldly things to yield; and these things will be disposed of, so as may best please him that has the chief room in our hearts. All the streams of our love to things below, will be swallowed up in the depth of our love to Christ: but this will be swallowed up by none; for this love is strong as death. Many waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods drown it. If a man should give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly contemned; see Heb. xi. 25, 26. If the love of the world predominate, then it leaves no love to the Lord, because no predominant love of the world is consistent with the true love of God: 1 John ii. 15, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." This proves the man no disciple of Christ, Matth. vi. 24; James iv. 4; 2 Tim. iii. 4, 5.—Consider,

3. That if Christ be not dearer to us than the world, there is no universal resignation, which is necessary to prove the sincerity of the heart: Acts ix. 6, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do!" 2 Cor. viii. 5.—"But first gave their ownselves to the Lord."—If this be wanting, there is nothing done; we give not to the Lord what he seeks, namely, that we be *all his*. If we deal thus in this solemn transaction, we do but lie to the Holy Spirit, as Ananias and Sapphira, keeping back part of the price. This is a sure evidence that grace is not effectually at work with us, else we would have been a willing people; we would have made no reserves in closing with Christ.—Consider,

4. That if Christ is not loved supremely, there is a root wanting, the fruit of which is necessary to evidence sincerity. (1.) There is no root of universal obedience, the want of which will leave us ashamed, Psalm cxix. 6. There will always be, in this case, one thing lacking, that will mar all other good things about us. There will always be some idol of jealousy that gets Christ's room; some offending right hand spared, that will bring the whole body to hell at length. (2.) There is no root for Christian suffering, bearing the cross of Christ, which is a cross of Christ's choosing, not of our own.

Our part is, to take up the cross that Christ lays down to us; and without this we cannot be his disciples. And when Christ lays on his cross, it is found, that readily he will have the man tried in that which of all things lies nearest his heart, and bids fairest for Christ's room: so that, if any thing be dearer than Christ, the cross readily discovers it, and the man's hypocrisy with it.

You, then, that are to sit down at the Lord's table, may see how you are to manage this solemn transaction, so as that it may be ratified in heaven. If you take Christ, let these go their way. Lay down your all at Christ's feet, with all solemn seriousness; if there be aught kept back, you do but ruin your own souls. The laws of Christ's school are read before you. Examine yourselves this night, whether ye be content with Christ on these terms or not. If you be not, it will be unnecessary, and even criminal, for you to come to his table; you cannot be his disciples. If you be content, then give up your all to him, and lay down your all at his feet. Because of the deceitfulness of your heart, it will be good to be very distinct and particular in this point, on which eternity depends.—In consequence, I would advise you,

1. To give up with all your lusts. You have held the grip long, let it now go: "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" Hos. xiv. 8. Let none escape, let there be no reserved morsel, as you would not quit your lot and portion in Christ. Let every man give up with "the iniquity he knoweth," as the phrase is, 1 Sam. iii. 13. If there be any bosom-lust, which has been a signal competitor for the heart with the Lord, let it be given up with in a particular manner. Sure, if lawful things must be laid at the Lord's feet, unlawful must much more be laid down.—I would advise you,

2. To lay down at the Lord's feet your nearest and dearest relations, so as that you may never break with Christ for them: his favour, truths, and ways, must be dearer to you than they. And sure I am, if thou meetest with Christ at his table, thou wilt say, "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh." "I will love my father, mother, wife, children, brethren, and sisters; but my Lord Jesus more than all."

3. Lay down at the Lord's feet your substance in the world, be it great or small, houses and lands, goods, &c. that he may dispose of them as he may see meet. Times have been, and they are like to return, wherein the Lord has sent for these things from professors, even by wicked messengers, as he sent for the ass and colt, Matth. xxi. 3, "Saying, The Lord hath need of them." And they that had before fairly given them, with themselves, to the Lord, did not stand to deliver him his own: "Go thou, and do likewise."

4. Lay down at the Lord's feet, your credit and esteem in the world. This is often a great idol, and goes betwixt many a man and Christ. There are few that ever have it, but suffer an eclipse in some time or other. God even sends for his people's credit, to be a stepping-stone for his glory. But if thou makest sure work in this transaction, thou wilt even be content at his call to creep down, and lie among the pots, till he himself bring thee out again. Thou wilt be content to commence a fool to the world, that thou mayest be wise to God.

5. Lay down at the Lord's feet, your ease and liberty: Acts xxi. 13, "I am ready," said Paul, not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus." The flesh will cry, "Man, spare thyself;" but the spirit must offer all to the Lord. Thou wilt not break with Christ, though thou shouldst never get an easy hour, but be hunted as partridges, till in heaven. He to whom his ease and liberty is dearer than Christ, is a slave to the devil, and cannot be Christ's disciple.

6. Lay down at Christ's feet, your desires. Your desires shall be to your spiritual Husband, who shall choose for you your inheritance, Psalm xlvii. 4. If he shall grant your lawful desires, it is well; if he see meet to refuse them, it must even be well also in your eye; you are to take himself, and give up with your own will, and say, Thy will be done.

Lastly, Lay down at the Lord's feet, your life. Let your bodies be given now to the Lord, not only for service, but also for a sacrifice, if he requires it. The text makes it plain, none go to heaven but martyrs, either in action or in affection. It may be the Lord may have use for your strength, for your health, it may be for your blood. Resign all to him now. If you hate not your life, you cannot be his disciple. Be not deterred from the sacrament by this, for, by the word of God, the way to heaven is no easier. But when the time comes, that the saints are to be carried to the table above, they will not be supposed to stand and look on, as when they present themselves before the lower table; the fearful and unbelieving shall be excluded from that table, Rev. xxi. 8. It is necessary at all times that people should manage matters thus when they sit down at the Lord's table, but especially at this time, when the cloud of the church's trouble is gathering so fast, and our peace is flying from us. That party has now got the ascendant, whose temper always has been to breathe out threatenings, cruelty, and blood, and furiously to drive their plough over the back of the church, and to make their furrows deep, till the righteous Lord do cut the cords of the ungodly crew.

They have brought in their superstitions already, by the favour of a toleration which reflects shame on themselves before the world, as if they were men of no faith, but as to one article. By their means we are threatened with idolatry, and with a French government. But God sits in heaven, and can bring order out of confusion. Let us prepare for whatsoever may come, honestly committing all to the Lord, and he will raise the sincere soul above itself, and give the back to bear its own burden, if we be but willing to stoop, and take it on for his sake. He left all for us, and shall we account any thing too much for him? However, this is the settled law of heaven, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Amen.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.*

SERMON XXXIV.

LUKE xvi. 26,

If any man come unto me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

HAVING, in the preceding, discourse, attended to what was proposed as the first and second heads of method, I now proceed,

III. To offer some reasons why Christ is dearer to his true disciples than what is dearest to them in the world.—Among other reasons, the following are mentioned.

1. Because to every true disciple, sin, of all bitter things, is the bitterest. A man will get a clearer view of the stars from the bottom of a deep pit, than from the top of a high mountain; and the lower that a man is laid in humiliation for sin, Christ will be the dearer to him. Many things, nay, almost any thing, is dearer to most persons than Christ. Why so? Because any bitter thing is more bitter to their depraved taste than sin. As when God intended to endear the promised land to the Israelites, and make them content to leave the flesh-pots of Egypt, Exod. i. 14, their lives then were made bitter to them; so God gives his people deep wounds for sin, till their consciences be made to dread it, and their

* Delivered at Selkirk, Monday, Oct. 12, 1712.

hearts to loathe it; he makes them sick at the heart with it, and puts more and more bitterness in the cup to them, till it be of all things the bitterest, to this very end, that Christ may be the dearest to them, and that whatever they may afterwards meet with in his way, they may embrace it rather than sin. Sin has been bitter to many, but not extremely bitter; therefore they say, as the drunkard, Prov. xxiii. 35, "When shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." But the experience of sin duly embittered quickly determines the Christian which side to choose, when they are brought to this alternative, to suffer or sin.—Another reason is,

2. That God is man's chief end; and when he made him, he made him pointing towards himself as his chief end: Eccl. vii. 29, "God made man upright." But man sinning, turned off from God, turned his intention, his love, and desire, beside the mark set before him, turned these in to himself, made himself his chief end. So that the whole of every natural man's religion, however refined, resolves itself into that cursed principle, "Master, spare thyself." Hence they choose new gods, father, mother, &c. setting their heart on them more than on God. Hence is their war in the gates against heaven, those things which were to be subordinate to God are set in opposition to him; those which were to be below him in their love and esteem, are set above him. If the grace of God rectify not this disorder, it does nothing: for it is impossible, while the soul is perverted as to its chief end, that any thing can be right with that person; as a watch that is once wrong set, though it go never so regularly, it is still wrong, for it never points right. But grace truly, though not perfectly while here, brings back the Christian to God as his chief end. It makes him say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon the earth that I desire besides thee," Psalm lxxiii. 25; and again, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain," Phil. i. 21. It makes him holy in all manner of conversation; so that whatever way the Christian turns, he points habitually towards God.—Another reason is,

3. That as there unquestionably is, so they have seen, a vanity and emptiness in all things of the world, even the things that are dearest to them: Psalm cxix. 96, "I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad." God has hung the sign of vanity at the door of all the creatures, yet do men throng into the house, every one calling and looking for a fill, and promising it to themselves after a thousand disappointments: Isa. lvii. 10, "Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way: yet saidst thou not, There is no hope: thou hast found the life of thine hand; therefore thou wast not grieved." They see not the sign by the

light of grace, although they may have a rational conviction of it, which will be as far from producing a true weaning of the heart from the world, as painted fire is from burning off a man's hands. But Christians are made to see it with the light of grace, which is the light of life, which makes them go by the creatures' door to him in whom "it hath pleased the father that all fulness should dwell," Col. i. 19. The Lord squeezes the sap out of all things, besides himself, to his own, so as that when the heart is seeking its rest, they are tasteless to them as the white of an egg: Phil. iii. 7, 8, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ."—Another reason is,

4. Because they find Christ of all objects the most suitable to them, and therefore he cannot but be dearer to them than the dearest thing in the world. The soul which has long gone through the dry places of the world, seeking rest, and finding none, when it comes to Christ, finds rest to the conscience under the covert of his blood, and rest to his heart in that all-fulness dwelling in Christ which is commensurate to the unbounded desires of the heart, desires which can never be satisfied but by an infinite good; and therefore of necessity, and from choice, settles here, saying, "This is my rest;" and that soul is not to be drawn away from Christ by any means whatever: Rom. viii. 35, 38, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? For I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." He is fully suited to their case: and, what is more, he is suited to their mind, they have no fault whatever to him: Song v. 16, "His mouth is most sweet, yea, he is altogether lovely; this is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem." There is nothing in him they would have out of him, and nothing out of him they would have in him; whereas every created enjoyment is lame, and defective to a great degree; the fairest rose has some sharp prickles about it. Now, that soul which has traversed all created enjoyments dissatisfied, and could never find contentment, is completely satisfied in him. How, then, can it otherwise be, than that he is dearer to it than all other persons and things whatever?—Another reason is,

5. Because he is their greatest benefactor; his unparalleled benefits command their hearts to be all his: he has done for them what

none other could do. When Lebanon was not sufficient to burn, nor the cattle on a thousand hills for a sacrifice, when rivers of oil were too shallow, and the fruit of their bodies for the sin of their souls would have been rejected, he redeemed them with his own blood; he left the bosom of his Father, and came and poured out his soul unto death for them, when they deserved to have died for ever. He is doing for them what none can do, he is their resident at the court of heaven, taking up emergent differences betwixt God and them, preparing a place for them in his Father's house of many mansions. And he will do for them what none but he himself can do; he will at last bring them to his glory, and make them perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of their God and Saviour through all eternity.—Another reason is,

6. Because they are sensible, that whatever they have in the world, they have it through and by him. And so they behold him as the fountain of all their mercies.—Thus,

(1.) They have the enjoyment of their blessings through him. It is by him they enjoy father and mother, wife and children, &c.; not only by his common providence, as the wicked enjoy their mercies, but by his blood, whereby the malefactor is not only pardoned, but also is set down with these, and far better things, as the purchase of Christ's blood; whereas, had not the Mediator intervened betwixt them and the stroke of justice, they had been stripped of all their enjoyments in the world, even life itself, and shut up for ever in the prison of hell.*

(2.) They have the comfort of them through him. Every creature is to us what the Lord makes it to be, and it is no more; no more it can be. The creature in itself is a mere nothing: what drops of sweetness are to be found in it, are distilled into it from himself, the fountain of goodness: none good but one, that is, God. And surely the Lord never puts any sweetness in the creature to arrest our hearts upon it, but rather that, finding the sweetness of the streams, we might thereby be drawn up to the Fountain, where sweet water is always sweetest. Let God call in his own from our enjoyments, our dearest relations shall be utterly uncomfortable; yea, our very life a burden. If it be by him only, then, that our enjoyments are desirable, surely himself is much more so. And seeing the Christian loves these things for what of God is in them,

* The worthy author is doubtless here to be understood as referring to that comfort and benefit which is enjoyed in such relations; for it is only in the nature and extent of this kind of enjoyment, that a difference arises between the Christian and the sinner, or that the former, with propriety, can contemplate the enjoyment of these relations as the fruit of Christ's blood.—EDIT.

and with them, and can never be satisfied with them without Christ, surely Christ himself must be dearest of all.—Another reason is,

7. Because, if it were not so, Christ would have no church in the world. His standard would fall, and there would be none to take it up. There is an old inveterate enmity in the wicked against godliness; the devil's partizans are alway the most numerous. If imprisoning, banishing, spoiling of goods, fields and scaffolds reeking with the blood of the saints, would have deterred all persons from following Christ, there had been no church in the world this day. But God will have a church in spite of devils and wicked men. The spark shall be kept alive, though in the midst of an ocean, and "his name shall endure for ever," Psalm lxxii. 17. A new seed shall ever be rising to enlist themselves under Christ's banner. God will not remove the rocks for them, but the way to heaven, to the world's end, shall lie through many tribulations; for he will animate his people to quit with all that is dearest to them in a world, rather than quit his way, and make them overcome through the word of his testimony, and not love their lives even unto death.—I come now,

IV. To make some practical improvement.

1. In an use of information.—You may hence see,

(1.) That Christ will admit no rival in the heart. One throne cannot receive two kings, and one heart cannot admit both Christ and any worldly thing set up beside him; it must needs lie at his feet, or all is wrong in that heart; Matth. vi. 24, "No man can serve two masters.—Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Christ and the world have long struggled together, it is hard to tell which of them many of us have been chiefly following: but when Christ and the world parts, it will be known which of them is our master.—Hence see,

(2.) How far those persons are from being Christ's disciples, to whom a loathsome lust is dearer by far than the Lord Christ. Though it tends to ruin their bodies, their souls, and consciences, they notwithstanding will not part with it for Christ. When Christ commands thee to do some great thing for him, how wilt thou do it? Is it a right hand, a right eye? Thou must cut it off, pluck it out; for wast thou parting with all but one thing, this one will eternally separate betwixt Christ and thee, if thou canst not also part with it for him.—Hence see,

(3.) That men are not out of danger, even when walking within the bounds of lawful things. It is a certain observation, that lawful things are a ditch, in which many souls are drowned, Matth. xxiv. 38, 39. A man in the use of lawful things, is like one walking

on the brink of a steep precipiece; the ground is firm, but his head is ready to become giddy, and he may fall over. It is hard to rejoice in them, and not to overjoy; to have them, and yet to sit loose to them. Be often feeling the pulse of thy affection to them, how it beats, lest it be so violent as to separate Christ and thee.

(4.) This shews what is the root of apostacy and defection from the truths and ways of Christ, in a time of the church's trials and troubles. It is the things of the world being dearer than Christ, his truth and ways, this is the first spring of it: "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved the present world." If Christ be dearer to us than all things else, we will follow him wherever he goes, and never break with him, for the world's frowns.—I shall only add,

2. An use of exhortation.

Let me now exhort all of you, especially those who have been communicants, to evidence yourselves the true disciples of Christ by your comparative hating of father and mother, &c., for Christ and his cause in the world. Let your hearts be loosed from, and do you sit loose to, all that is dear to you in the world, resolving in the Lord's strength, and showing yourselves ready to part with all for Christ, if he shall call you to it. In order to influence your complying with the exhortation, I would lay before you the following motives:—

Mot. 1. This is necessary to fit you for trials; that you may be able to stand in the evil day, arm your souls with this disposition. —For this purpose consider,

(1.) That the pathway to heaven lies by the cross, and all who have a real desire for heaven must lay their account with suffering; John xvi. 33, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Acts xiv. 22, "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom." .2 Tim. iii. 12, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Therefore he who does not lay his account thus is a foolish builder, Luke xiv. 25, and downwards. There is always a hot noon-tide in the church's day, Song i. 7, and it may as certainly be expected as the noon.—Consider,

(2.) That the things which concern us appear to be making haste. You have enjoyed the dispensation of the sacrament after Christ's institution in peace, we have no great ground to promise another such season in a haste. There has been much sad work wrought upon this church in a little time, and it is the temper of our enemies to drive more violently than deliberately. We have had long peace, and the air is usually quiet and clear before an earthquake, and the winds are laid before great rains fall. The gospel has been doing little good for many years; and where people

are not bettered, they are made worse by it. I believe there was never a generation more disposed to root out serious godliness from the earth, than that which this time affords. Among the fashionable people of the age, religion is become almost quite out of fashion. Ministers and professors, through long ease, have gathered much mud, they need to be emptied from vessel to vessel. And it seems that judgment, as ordinary, must begin at the house of God, to purge it, and prepare the nations for a more dreadful vengeance; so that it is probable it will be brought to this ere long,—suffer or sin.—Consider,

(3.) That it is not easy to stand in a time of trial. Many will venture to sea in a fair day, that will never abide a storm. Many tall cedars have been blown up from the root by the wind of persecution, and they who have stood firmest, their towering branches have been made to sweep the ground. Be not over confident; though you have endured a storm already, there may be a harder yet before you, Heb. x. 34, compared with chap. xii. 4. There is need, then, to be preparing.—Consider,

(4.) That this will fit you for it. When the things of the world hang loose about us, like Joseph's mantle, and Satan, by the hands of wicked men, seizes them, to draw us to him by them, they will slip off, and we will leave them in their hand, and so escape, as he did. They who are standing ready to encounter, will resist the enemy, while they who are surprised will fall into confusion. It is a sad thing to feel trouble before we see it, to be past hope before we have any fear. Troubles that find men secure, ordinarily leave them desperate.

Mot. 2. Apostacy and defection from God in a trying time, is dreadful and dangerous: Heb. x. 38, "Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." God punishes men of this description oftentimes remarkably. How has a spirit of defection been followed in the fearful judgment of God with a spirit of persecution; for when God departs, the spirit is imbittered. As the sharpest vinegar is made of the most generous wine, so apostate professors ofttimes become the bitterest persecutors. Besides, their gifts often wither, and dry up. It has also often been seen, that they have quickly lost their all dishonourably, who have gone out of God's way to save it, while they who have walked honestly, have walked surely. Dreadful above expression will their doom be, if they get not grace to repent: Matth. x. 33, "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." But, Heb. x. 32, "Call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions."

3. The truths and ways of God are more worth than the whole of what we have to lose for them. It is a general rule: Prov. xxiii. 23, "Buy the truth, and sell it not." The profane spirits of some influence their slighting some less truths of religion; and they imagine, after doing so, that they are secure from suffering, while the foundation points remain untouched. If these men valued their bodies as little as they do the truths of God, they would, in like manner, allow you to cut and mangle them as you please, provided ye did not stab them in the heart: but they who value fundamental truths, because of Christ's stamp upon them, will not dare to give up with circumstantial truths which they know, seeing they also bear the same impression of divine authority; so that it is a bold venture for a man, on any pretence, to quit the word of Christ's patience in a time of trial, and to step out of God's way: for he leaves his soul in pawn for it, which is of more worth than all he has in a world; and it is one to a thousand, if ever he has power to come back, and redeem it by repentance.

Mot. 4. Death is approaching, and then you must part with all you have in the world. Cleave as fast as you will to these things, you must let go your hold at length. The serious consideration of the shortness of our time, the certainty of death, and the uncertainty of the time of it, would discover to us, that the whole we can make by turning aside from God's way in a time of trial, is not worth our trouble, not worth the going off our road for it; for it may be, what is refused for Christ may quickly be taken from you at death. I am sure we will never part so easily with what we have, as when we sit loose to it. Ripe fruit falls off the tree with a shake, when the unripe must be rent off. When the heart is loosed from what we have in the world, it is easy parting with it, by what it is when the heart holds by it till it be forced from it.—Nothing is ever parted with so honourably, as when it is parted with for Christ. No thanks to you that you part with what you have, when God takes it from you whether you will or not. It is honourable to forsake the world at Christ's call, for Christ's sake, before we be forsaken of the world.

Mot. 5. You will be no losers at Christ's hands. If you quit with them now to Christ, he probably will let you keep them, and accept of your will for the deed. This was the case with Abraham, when called to offer up Isaac; and with David when it was in his heart to build a house to the Lord. Thus you will have them with his blessing and favour. If he take them from you, without them you will get a throughbearing: Psalm xxxvii. 3, "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." A little served up to you from the promise, and brought to

your hand by a particular providence, will have a double sweetness in it. That bread will not be lost which is thrown upon these waters; after many days you shall find it: Matth. xix. 29, "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit eternal life." Himself will be to you instead of all, and better than all here; and heaven will fully make up all hereafter.

If any shall say, "But, O! I fear I shall never be able to carry through," I would say to such, You know that the foundation of your throughbearing is laid, if your heart be loosed from all things besides Christ, and if he be dearer to you than what is dearest to you in a world: Psalm xlv. 10, 11, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house. So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty, for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him." When the king thus greatly desires thy beauty; he will see to preserve it; John x. 28, 29, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, who gave them me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." You have taken him for all, and it lies upon his honour to see you carried through. Live by faith, and draw your daily supplies from him: Hab. ii. 4, "The just shall live by his faith." Isa. xl. 31, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." Amen.

A RICH REWARD TO DILIGENCE IN RELIGION.*

SERMON XXXV.

Hos. vi. 3,

Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord.

It is an observation of Soloman's, Prov. xii. 27, "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting." Men are at some pains to get something, but when they have got it, they let it slip through their fingers. Hence our religion, good frames, attainments, resolutions, &c. turn to small account. We are at some pains to acquire something when attending divine ordinances, but then we put it in

* Delivered at Tweedsmuir, April, 1712.

a bag with holes. Now, the text tells us how to remedy this loss, and to bring our religion to some good account: and that is, when once our hand is in, to follow on eagerly: "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord."—In these words consider,

1. What is the sum and substance of all religion. It is "the knowledge of the Lord," that is, the practical knowledge of him, who can only be truly known in Jesus Christ. That thus the knowledge of the Lord is here to be understood, is evident, not only from the nature of the thing, but from other scriptures: John xvii. 3, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." See also Hos. vi. 6; Jer. xxii. 16.—Consider,

2. The beginning of religion supposed. This is supposed in the particle *then*, namely, when we have turned to the Lord; and likewise in following on to know the Lord.—Consider,

3. The pursuit of religion, or the knowledge of the Lord proposed. We shall follow on, if we shall not content ourselves with the measure attained, but go on still farther, improving the beginnings. (Heb. pursue), which is an eager sort of following, as is the case when we follow a fleeing enemy.—Consider,

4. The benefit of this pursuit: "Then shall we know," we shall thrive in our religion, get a larger measure of it even of a practical experimental knowledge of the Lord. We shall be still adding a cubit to our spiritual stature. The more we pursue, the more we will gain.—From this subject, I observe the following

Doctrine, That the way to thrive in religion is to follow on, to pursue, to hold our hand to it, when once our hand is in it.

It is evident, this is a day in which there is little thriving in religion. It is long since the generation began to weary of God, and professors to decline; yet sometimes there is a blowing up of the spark, but, alas! it dies always out again. Sometimes people look so well when attending upon ordinances, we would almost think it was a pity they should ever go from them; but when they are away, and the communion-frame has worn off, they look so ill, that one would think it was a pity that ever they should come to them again. We would show you how to prevent this; and, that things may apply the more closely to your consciences, I shall,

I. Shew who they are whom we may call to follow on.

II. I shall show what it is to follow on, or how you must hold your hand to religion, that you may thrive in it, now that your hand is in it.

III. I shall confirm the doctrine, and shew you, that it is the true

way to thrive; and the belief of it would be a great spur to diligence. Then,

IV. Conclude with the improvement of the subject.

We are then,

I. To shew who they are whom we may call to follow on.

There are some we cannot call to follow on, because they have not yet stirred a foot in religion. There are some who, for all that they have heard and seen, are quite stupid and unconcerned, lying asleep in their chains; they have no good motions on their spirits, and feel no concern for the want of them. Our text calls us to leave you, but a word or two before we part.

1. What would you think, if you saw the showers of heaven, after a great drought, fall all around your land upon your neighbour's ground, but not one drop on yours? would you not think you were the mark at which God aims his arrow? Now, what can you think of yourselves, when God touches the hearts of others about you, but never touches yours? when he goes by you, and comes by you, speaks to those on your right hand and on your left, but not a word to you? Does not that look very like what is in Hos. iv. 17, "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone." To see a tree in the winter without leaves, is nothing; but in the spring, when all is flourishing about it, such a tree is fit for the axe, and is near to the fire.

2. Do you think the world will always last with you? will you always sleep in a sound skin? Nay, sooner or later you shall get an awakening, in mercy or in wrath: Isa. xxxii. 9, 10, "Rise up, ye women that are at ease; hear my voice, ye careless daughters, give ear unto my speech. Many days and years shall ye be troubled, ye careless women; for the vintage shall fail, the gathering shall not come." If you should sleep it out all your days, you shall at last awaken, Luke xvi. God will one time or another take the filthy garments of your sins, wrap them up in brimstone, and set them on fire about your ears.

But there are several sorts of persons, whose hands we may say are now in their work: and their business is to pursue.—Such as,

1. There may be some whom the King has brought into his chambers, and assured them of his love, and they have got the covenant sealed, not only with the public seal of the sacrament, but the private seal of the Spirit. Your business is to follow on, and improve the precious season for the church of God, and for yourselves: Exod. xxxiv. 8, 9, "And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped. And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us."

Follow on to know. There is more in that God, that Christ, that covenant manifested to you, than you have yet seen.—There are,

2. Others that have got but some glimmerings of solid hope from the Lord. It may be that they come here in a dark night of desertion, saying, "My hope is perished from the Lord," Lam. iii. 18. But now the day begins to break, and they have some hope that there may be yet room for a backslider. Follow on, his going forth shall be as the morning, which grows lighter and lighter to the perfect day.—There may be,

3. Some who, it may be, Christ has treated, as Joshua did his captains, when he made them set their feet upon the necks of the captive kings, Josh. x. 24. Some lust that has long kept them under, they have now got subdued, the bonds of wickedness are broken, and the gates of brass pulled down; so that now they are conquerors over their spiritual foes. To such we would say, Bestir yourselves and pursue. Wounded lusts, when they get time to recover, have made sad work at a second onset; you are not yet there, where the gates shall not be shut at all by day. You are, however, strong for the present; follow on, and you will be yet stronger: Zech. xii. 8, "In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among you at that day, shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them."—There may be,

4. Some who have not come so far forward yet, though they are come the length to be heartily content that they and their lusts were freely parted, though they cannot tell how it will be accomplished. Follow on, pursue, you have them at a fair advantage. The throne of sin in the heart is shaken. Lusts sit looser than they did. Press hard upon the tottering fabric, and it may come to fall altogether; so that you may soon be ready to say with Ephraim, "What have I any more to do with idols?" Hos. xiv. 18.—There may be,

5. Some who have not come so far, but yet they have some desires after Christ and religion. They have a hungering after him, and they are more squeamish as to their lusts than they were: though they cannot as yet see, if they forego the world and their lust, how their loss will be made up, Truly this is not much; but every thing must have a beginning. Follow on; that cloud, like a man's hand, may come to darken the heavens at length. The conversion of Zaccheus had as slender a beginning, Luke xix. 3. You have seen, you were touched, look on, take a better look of the Plant of Renown, and ye may come to be affected, allured, and captivated.—There may be,

6. Some who have not come even so far, but they have got some

convictions of sin; and though they have no will to part with their lusts, yet, they cannot see how to live with them, and as little can they see how to live without them. Their conscience is awakened, but their heart is just where it was. It is a small length this indeed; but follow on. If the conscience has got the first touch, the heart may get the next. If sin is become uneasy to the conscience, it may become a burden to the heart next, and so the sweet morsel may be vomited up.—There may be,

Lastly, Some who have not come so far as to have any particular conviction, or quick touches of conscience, only they have a sort of uneasiness with respect to the case of their souls, a secret dissatisfaction with their state and case, which they see is not good. This is even as little as can reasonably be concluded to be any beginning of good; yet follow on, pursue this, think more attentively upon it. If the dry bones be but beginning to move, they at last may come together, and live,—We now proceed,

III. To show what it is to follow on, how you must hold your hand to religion, that ye may thrive in it, now that your hand is in it. The word imports a violence and eagerness, such as men have in pursuing an enemy, persecuting the people of God, or in hunting for prey.—Wherefore, when following on,

1. You must make religion your great end. As every man who pursues has something in view, so your great design must be to know the Lord: "Not," says Paul, "as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." There was a prospect which misgave at first with Adam, because Satan laid the measures for it, Gen. iii. 5. But you must take it up again, as the Lord himself will have you: Matth. v. 48, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect." When once grace touches the heart, it produces a certain restlessness there, till the soul be perfectly united with God. You will never make any good of religion, till you make it your grand object in the world. You must not be merely occasional customers to religion, of which see an instance, Judges xviii. 5, but stated and constant.—When following on,

2. You must be persuaded of the weight and worth of religion; for no wise man will pursue what he thinks not worth the pains. What is the reason that the men of the world do not follow on to know the Lord? Why, truly, the most part are of Pharaoh's opinion, that religion is only for those who have no other thing to do. Hence it may be, they have got something to do here for the present; but if they were at home, they have another thing to do than to

follow it out: Matth. xxii. 5, "But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise." The shadow of the world is substance with them, Hos. xii. 1, 8; and the substance of religion is a shadow; but O! consider, "what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" A wedge of gold would make a sluggard run, and shall not a weight of glory make us follow on?—When following on,

3. You must hold fast what you have; the pursuer will be very loth to go back a step; Rev. iii. 3, "Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent." Beware that the spark does not go out, for thus you may quickly have a cold coal to blow at. Make much of any good motion put into your heart. Say not, it is not much you have to hold; for the less it is, it will die out the easier, and there is thus the more need to keep it in. It cannot be so little, but Satan will think it worth his pains to rob you of it. The kingdom of heaven in the soul has a small beginning, like a grain of mustard-seed, and must be cherished.—When following on,

4. You must not stand still, but be moving forward, labouring for more, be it much or little which you have: Phil. iii. 12, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." A man who sits down on his attainments, will quickly be empty-handed. The fire will go out, if constant fuel be not furnished to it. Good beginnings will be lost, if they be not cherished. Hast thou but one conviction? follow on to get it more deeply rooted. Be earnest that it spread further into thy heart and life, that thou mayest bring forth fruits meet for repentance.—When following on,

5. You must habitually attend upon religion, and make it your chief business: 1 Thess. v. 15, "See that none render evil for evil unto any man, but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men." Fits and starts of religion cannot be reckoned a following on, or holding our hands to it. You must labour to weave the whole life into one continued web of religion: 1 Pet. i. 15, "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." Whatever way you may turn, you should still be pointing towards God. You must not be sober at home, and loose abroad: not a church-saint, and a house-devil; a pretender to piety, and a renouncer of honesty. You must say to all temptations which would take you off your way, as Joab, in his pursuit, 2 Sam. xviii. 14, "I may not tarry thus with thee."—When following on,

6. You must be resolute and vigorous in your endeavours: Eccl. ix. 10, "Whatsoever they hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Mere endeavours will not reach heaven: Matth. xi. 12, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Our iron is blunt, we must therefore apply the more strength. Our work is great, our strength small, our opposition powerful; but we must do or die. The work of religion will not prosper with only good wishes and folded hands. No; we must exert our hands, and set down our feet: Prov. ii. 4, 5, "If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hidden treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."—When following on,

7. You must entertain a hope of success. No man will pursue but in hopes to overtake. We will have difficulties to grapple with in this pursuit; but let us "who are of the day be sober, putting on the breast-plate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation." When the heart grows hopeless, the hands will hang down, and the knees be feeble: Heb. x. 35, "Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward." You must learn to hope against hope. You have the promise in the text to encourage you. What though many attempts misgive? The tree falls not down at the first or second stroke of the axe; and the water, by continued dropping, wears the stones.—When following on,

Lastly, If you fall, you must get up again, and quicken your pace; and the sooner the better. The longer you lie, you will find it the harder to get up. If you find the impressions on your spirit begin to decay, take them in time, and go to God with them for a revival: Rev. iii. 2, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die."

From what has been observed, we may learn, that the world shall never be able to ruin religion, as long as there are some remaining who will honestly follow after it. The hostile designs against religion are plainly exposed at this day, and its enemies have begun to put them in execution. There are contrivances on foot to debauch men's consciences, and mischief is framed into a law. Such a toleration of superstition, errors, and blasphemies, is set on foot, as is a shame to a Christian country, no point of Christianity being protected from the insults of vile men, but the doctrine of the Holy Trinity; and withal, patronages are restored to make way for introducing the most naughty men into the ministry, while the most conscientious will find more difficult access. The discipline of the church is left to be trodden under foot of profane men. And what

is all this, but to ruin religion, and the covenanted work of reformation? But while our text remains, religion shall never be ruined, if we will follow after it. Let men and devils do their utmost, it shall stand, till its followers abandon and give up with it. And therefore, if it be ruined, the ruin will lie at our own doors, in not cleaving to it; but woe be to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed!

You may see here how to turn the cannon on the enemies of religion this day. It is very natural for zeal to grow by opposition. Now, the friends of religion in Scotland have been long at a stand, and its enemies have begun to drive the work back. Should we now awake, and follow it more vigorously, then should *we know*. We should discern the flame to spread more and more, we should see the Lord going forth as the morning, his work prospering over the belly of opposition, superstition and profanity gliding away as the darkness of the night at the morning-dawn. We should perceive him as a giant refreshed with wine, rising to defend and carry on his own work.

Be exhorted, therefore, to hold your hands to religion now when your hand is in it. As ever you would do a good deed to the church of God, and to your own souls, follow religion closely in your practice. It is observed of some of the builders of the wall of Jerusalem, that they repaired each over against his own house, Neh. iii. 23, 28, 30. Make it your endeavour, that your own exercise be right; this will be so much reformation. If you have got never so little, hold your hands to it, labour to get it strengthened this night.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.*

SERMON XXXVI.

Hos. vi. 3,

Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know the Lord.

HAVING, in the former discourse, attended to the two first heads of the method we laid down, we now proceed,

III. To confirm the doctrine, or show you, that the way to follow religion is, to follow on, to pursue, to hold your hands to it, when once your hand is in it.—And the belief of this would be a great

* Delivered Monday, Sept. 1, 1712.

spur to diligence. If a person, digging with great labour in the earth, was almost ready to give it over, but another comes to him, and persuades him, that if he will hold on, he would assuredly find a treasure, he would unquestionably renew his resolution, and vigorously follow it out. This I would persuade you of, in regard to religion: however small your beginnings or hopes may now be, yet persevere: "Be not weary in well-doing, for in due time ye shall reap, if ye faint not."—To convince you as to this, consider,

1. You have God's word of promise for it: Matth. xxv. 29, "For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance." A man hath no more in God's account, than what he keeps and improves for God's glory and his own salvation. Now, God does not set down all his children with equal stocks. There are fathers, youths, and babes in Christ. Some get more, some less; but there is a promise of more given to them all, on their holding their hands to what they have got. It is God's goodness to most of us, that we are held short by the head, and that any thing we get, we know well how we come by it. This is necessary that our light hearts may not grow vain, and that our careless spirits may be aroused the more. But a little thing, with a promise, will be like the five loaves that multiplied in the distribution.—Consider,

2. That it is the Lord's ordinary way in his works, to bring great things by degrees out of small beginnings. He could have made the world in a moment, but he took six days to it; at first there was but the rude mass, which day by day was brought to perfection. See an instance, 1 Kings xviii. 43, and downwards. See how another great work began, Esth. vi. 1. Both which places consult. See also in the text: "His going forth is prepared as the morning." In his works of grace, as in the works of nature, he ordinarily keeps that way of advancing by degrees.—Consider,

3. That the works of grace in the soul ordinarily arise from very small beginnings. The grain of mustard-seed, called the smallest of seeds, is used as an emblem of this, Matth. xiii. 31, 32. It is a seed springing so leisurely, that the springing of it cannot sometimes be discerned in the time, Mark iv. 27. It springeth and groweth up, we know not how. See how low the beginning of good may be, which the Lord will cherish, and bring to perfection: Isa. xlii. 3, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth."—Consider,

4. The bountiful nature of God, who surely will not always flee from those who follow him, but will at length be found of them. If at any time he seem to flee from them, it is that they may follow him the more vigorously: if he hold meat from them a while, it is that

their appetite may be the more sharpened, Luke xxiv. 28, 29. But resolute following on cannot miss to find him. See an eminent instance of this in the Syrophenician woman, who besought Jesus to cast the devil out of her daughter, and persevered till she obtained her request, Mark vii. 25—29. For good being in its nature communicative of itself, goodness itself cannot fail to be so. The spouse had experience of this, Song iii. 1—4. Consider,

5. That no person gets a refusal from heaven, but those who court it by their own indifference: and indeed a faint way of seeking is to beg a denial. God is more ready to give, than we are to seek: Psalm lxxxi. 10, "Open thy mouth wide," says he, "and I will fill it." He loves importunity, and cannot deny an importunate suitor; and though some such have stood long at his door, there was never a single individual who fell down dead at it; their long waiting was always made up by the greater incomes of favour which they experienced, Matth. xv. 21, and downwards. The richest treasure is that which lies deepest.—Consider,

6. That as importunity is usually in all cases the way to come speed, so it has special advantages in this case which promise success. The Lord gives much to importunity; Luke xi. 9, "And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." The word in the eighth verse rendered "importunity," is in the Greek "shamelessness." Pinching need makes people shameless. It is not here as with men, that a shameless seeker must get a shameless refusal; they who will not, cannot take a denial, shall not be troubled with it: and when there is enough and to spare to the needy, this and their condition makes them shameless; both concur to make them importunate.

7. But further consider, that such followers the Lord does not bid them go back; and is not this very encouraging? If a beggar be following a man for an alms, and he knows it, there is always hope while he does not command him away. Now, you will follow long ere the Lord bid you go away; but if there were no hope, you would soon get your answer. Thus the foolish virgins were soon answered with a "Verily I say unto you, I know you not," Matth. xxv. 12.—Consider also,

8. That the Lord commands you to follow on: Luke xi. 19, "And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." And is not that encouraging? I know unbelief will be ready to shape an answer to the soul, taking God's delay for a denial, that the soul may follow no further: Jer. ii. 25, "Withhold thy foot from being unshod,

and thy throat from thirst; but thou saidst, There is no hope; no." It is, however, better to hang on about God's door, than go back to fill our belly with the husks which swine devour. He commands you to follow on, and he would not do it if there was no hope.—Consider farther,

9. That it is the Lord who has given you the foot to follow him: James i. 17, "Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." If you have any desire after him, or the least good motion, it is from himself; and though he should have no regard for you, he will regard his own work in you, if you do not put it away from you. God opens not his children's mouth to put an empty spoon in it; but he who forms the desire will satisfy.—Consider,

Lastly, That the very nature of the thing confirms it, that the more we apply ourselves to the business of religion, we shall bring it to the better account. It is true, we own that religion in the principle of it is infused into the heart; but the Christian having both to will and to do wrought in him by God, must work out his own salvation with fear and trembling, Phil. ii. 12, 13. Grace, by its exercise, increases. Whatever good motions the Lord has put into the heart, it is like a spring; the more opening which it gets, and the more it runs, the more water comes into it; whereas, if it be stopped, the water turns away, and seeks another opening.

IV. We are now to make some practical improvement,

I. In an use of information.

Is it so that the way to prosper in religion is to follow on to know the Lord? Then we may learn,

(1.) That those who have not yet begun to look and seek after the Lord, they are neither prospering in their souls, nor are they in the way to it. Hearken, O ye stupid souls, whose hearts within you are this day dead as stones, moving still towards the earth, but having no motion in them towards God. Your case is sad, and there is no appearance yet of its growing better; it is dark night with you, and there is no appearance of the morning light. Your hearts are shut against Christ, and there is no putting in of his hand at the hole of the door; you have not the smallest prospect of happiness.—We may see,

(2.) That it is no wonder though backsliders have lean souls. How many are there this day, who, comparing their own case with what it has been formerly, may cry out, as in Isa. xxiv. 16, "But I said, My leanness, My leanness, woe unto me." They have lost the delight they sometimes had in God; there is now little or no communication

between heaven and them. Whence does this take place? Why, they did not follow on, when they were once set fair off, but went backward. When the wind was fair for Immanuel's land, they trifled away their time, busy here and there about other things; and their fair occasions were lost.—We may see,

(3.) That they are in no prospering case who are at a stand in religion. There is a generation who think they have got as much grace as will carry them to heaven, and therefore they are not pressing forward. Paul had more than ever they could pretend to, yet says he, Phil. iii. 12, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." Truly, if you continue thus, it will be an evidence that you have no grace at all; for, Prov. iv. 18, "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

(4.) You may see how the smallest spark which you now have, may be brought to a great flame. Do but follow on to know the Lord, and then you shall know, you shall make progress; and though your stock be but small, you may come to make that blessed account of it which is in Luke xix. 16, "Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds." Hold your hands to what you have got here, when you are gone from this place, and you will find it will grow in your hands; it will increase in the using.—But here some may propose an

Objection: "I am a fearful backslider, who have wasted my stock which some time increased with me in that way, and can I think ever to recover it again? Answ. Return, O prodigal! there is yet room for thee in thy Father's house. The promise in the text concerns you as well as others. See also Hos. v. 15, and chapter vi. 1, and downwards, where there is great encouragement to returning backsliders. Are you convinced of your folly? are you touched at the heart with your backsliding? are your souls moving for a return? as in Jer. xxxi. 18, "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, Thou has chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God." Then it may yet be as well with you as ever it was, Joel ii. 23—27.

Lastly, We may hence see what is the ruin of many communicants, and others who attend upon ordinances. It is not so much that they get nothing at them, as that they carry nothing away with them; or if they do, they do not hold their hands to it when they are at home. You who think that your work is over when the communion is over, you will make no good account of what you have

been doing. Would you not think him a foolish man, who would employ himself on the meadow sharping his scythe, and then lay it by when he has got it sharped? Wherefore came you here, but to get a meal for your journey heaven-ward; and if so, then go in the strength of it, go from strength to strength unweariedly, till you appear before God in Zion.—I come,

2. To an use of exhortation.

I would exhort you all to follow on, to hold your hands at religion, however small the beginnings of it may be with you; and to prevail with you, I would lay before you the following motives:—

Mot. 1. The way to prosper in religion is, when we find the least moving, to bestir ourselves, and hold our hands to it, as David, 2 Sam. v. 24, 25. We would all take measures for improving our bodies and estates, why not also for improving our souls? I am sure, there are sad symptoms of a spiritual consumption and decay on the generation in which we live; we have need to use the remedy for ourselves against it. These symptoms are such as the following—The stomach for our spiritual food is gone; ordinances are not prized; we look generally as if we had got a surfeit of the gospel; farms and merchandise go much nearer people's hearts than opportunities of communion with God, for which they will be loth to lose a day's work; an evidence this that we may have to fast till we find our stomachs again.—Another symptom is, that professors have generally lost their colour; their former beauty is gone. That heavenliness, spirituality, and tenderness, that savour of godliness which was sometimes about them, is also gone; and formality, worldly-mindedness, deadness and lifelessness, have come in their room; so that we may well say, "O our bones are dried!" Any growth there is, is in pride and self-conceit: like rickety children, a large head, but a poor lean body. Indeed, not a few are even turned the colour of the earth, that their profane neighbours may say, Behold, the man is become like one of us. It is a day in which God is drawing the veil from off many faces; and all this is drawing on to a national apostasy from the Lord. The alarm is sounded already to carry back this church into Egypt. Breaches are made to let in a deluge of superstition, error, and profaneness. The ruin of this church, and the covenanted work of reformation, is threatened. It is high time we were bestirring ourselves to hold our hands to the truths and ways of the Lord, handed down to us from our fore-fathers, that we may transmit them also to our posterity, by a faithful adherence to them, over the belly of all opposition, whether from open enemies or professed friends; and for that end, to be following on after the Lord's work in our own souls.

Mot. 2. Follow on, hold your hands to religion, however small a measure of it you have: for you shall know, if you follow on to know.

You shall know that a going foot in religion is always getting: Isa. xlv. 19, "I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain." They who are hanging on about the Lord's hand, will always find some off-fallings. Though they do not soon get the very thing they would be at, they will always get something in the mean time, well worth all the pains. If you be following on for comfort, this may be denied for a while, but you will be ready to get a deeper conviction to prepare the way for it; if, for deliverance from temptation, you may, like Paul, get grace to wrestle against, and to overcome it.—Again,

You shall know that religion is a reward to itself: Psalm xix. 11, "In keeping of them, (thy commandments), there is great reward." There is a pleasure in attending the very posts of Wisdom's door: Psalm lxxxiv. 10, "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand: I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." There is a sweet peace in the Lord's way: the strictest ways of religion are a pleasure; Prov. iii. 17, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." There is a great pleasure in seeing the bosom-idol on the cross, sin dying, and grace reviving in the soul.

You shall know, that the more you follow on, it shall be the easier; the more you walk in this way, you will be the more expert: Isa. xl. 31, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." That which makes religion so difficult to us, is our not holding at it, our taking it but by fits and starts. Is it not always the easier to you to seek the Lord, the oftener you are at his throne? But omit one occasion, you will find yourselves the less fit for the work.

You shall know, that some difficulties in religion, which are like mountains afar off, shall turn to mole-hills, when you resolutely come up to them. God will make iron gates open of their own accord to his people who are resolute to be through. Unbelief and carnality make difficulties where there are none. "A lion," says the sluggard, "is in the way." They make real difficulties greater: Exod. xiv. 15, 16, "And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward. But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it; and the children of Israel shall go on dry land through the midst of the sea." See David's experience, Psal. xviii. throughout.

You shall know that his goings forth are prepared as the morn-

ing. The manifestations of himself are certain. As the morning will certainly follow the darkest night, so the darkest time which a follower of the Lord has, will certainly issue in a morning-light of refreshment at length. These manifestations are also gradual. There is always more and more of God to be known, to be given out, according to the soul's diligent waiting and following on.

Mot. 3. You will be great losers if you do not follow on; you will lose what you have got. The sacred fire in your hearts will go out, if you do not cherish it, and if this should take place, you will be a step farther from heaven than you were. Nay, if you lose it, who knows if ever you will recover it again; if ever the wind will blow as fair for you to Immanuel's land, remember that which is in Luke xiv. 24, "For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." And if it should recover it, you will have to begin again, and it is a sad matter for people always to be but beginning; ever learning, and never coming to the knowledge of the truth, because they forget as fast as they learn. You will lose also all the pains you have been at to get what you have: Prov. xii. 27, "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting; but the substance of a diligent man is precious." What a sad matter is it to be at pains for something, and then when it is got, just to let it slip through our fingers! We have work enough besides. There is no propriety in always doing and undoing again. In a word, you will lose your souls, if you do not follow on to know the Lord; Luke ix. 62, "And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven." Heb. x. 38, "Now, the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." And it will be a bitter ingredient of hell in your heart, that sometime you was not far from the kingdom of God, and yet missed it.—To this may be proposed these objections:—

1. I have met with so many disappointments, how can I follow on further? Answ. You are not the first who have met with disappointments, Job xxiii. Song iii. And yet such have found him at length. Disappointments are useful to the people of God; they sharpen their appetite; they are necessary to give us honourable thoughts of, and to learn us to stoop to divine sovereignty, for our time is always ready, while his time may be not yet come. They make the enjoyment more sweet, when we are favoured with it. And therefore follow on, and wait the Lord's time.

2. My case grows worse and worse. Answ. What then? his goings forth shall be as the morning, and the darkest hour is usually before day-break.

I shall, in conclusion, offer the following directions:—

1. Look to God through Jesus Christ, from whence must come all your strength. Let your resolutions be taken up under a sense of weakness, and a persuasion of the supply to be had from the Lord himself.

2. Be much in prayer and meditation. These are suited to keep the impressions of God fresh upon your souls.

3. Make conscience of self-examination, that ye may the better know how it is with you, whether you be going backward or forward.

4. Beware of looking back, much more turning back, to your old sin, especially the sin which has been the great make-bate betwixt God and your soul. Keep special watch against it.

5. Beware of evil company, and follow only such as are following the Lord.

6. Live above the world while ye live in it. It will not be possible to follow on, if we come not to an holy indifference about the world.

Lastly, Keep the prize in your eye, and remember how short a time it will be before you arrive at your journey's end. This consideration will animate you to follow vigorously, because the time will not last, and the work must be done. It will dispose you to recollect, that ere long you will be at the end of every difficulty, that the days of your sorrow and mourning shall be ended. Amen.

THE ACCEPTABLE MANNER OF DRAWING NEAR TO GOD.*

SERMON XXXVII.

HEB. x. 22,

Let us draw near with a true heart, in the full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

I HAVE been, in our last discourses, urging and directing you to evidences for heaven; and we are shortly to celebrate that ordinance which is a special evidence of the Lord's love to his people, and appointed to evidence it to them. That it may be so in effect to us, let us hearken to the advice in the text; which is an improvement of the doctrine as to the great privileges of Christians. They

* Delivered May, 1715.

have freedom of access to God through Christ. They have Christ as an High Priest set over the house of God; therefore, "Let us draw near," &c.—Here we have,

1. An exhortation and excitement to a duty corresponding to the privileges which are through Jesus Christ: "Let us draw near," that is, to God. Though he is great, and infinitely glorious, dwells in the highest heavens; yet, seeing he is upon a throne of grace, let us not stand at a distance from him, but draw near to him in the whole of our conversation, and particularly in acts of worship waiting on him. Let *us* do it, the weak together with the strong; let us press in at the door of grace together.—We have,

2. The right way of managing this duty for God's honour and our own comfort. This is laid down in four particulars.

(1.) We should draw near to God with a "true heart," that is, a sincere heart; with the heart, and not with the lips only; not with a false hypocritical heart, but a heart true to God, true to our own real interest.—We are to draw near,

(2.) "In full assurance of faith." Let us come believingly, come in faith, leaning upon his Son, trusting in his blood. Let us not come doubtingly, doubting whether we will be welcome or not, whether there be access for us or not; but with full assurance, like a ship that is carried towards the port with full sail before the wind.—We are to draw near,

(3.) "Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience." An evil conscience is a guilty, accusing, and condemning conscience. This vexes, disquiets, and torments the heart. Guilt is the mother and nurse of fears. The sting of guilt in the conscience is like a thorn in a man's foot; when he is called to meet a friend, alas! he cannot go, he dare not set a foot to the ground, or every step goes to his heart. The way to cure this is, by sprinkling with the blood of sprinkling, that is, by faith applying the blood of Christ for remission of sin. This makes the soul meet to draw near to God, and that with full assurance, even as the unclean under the law were cleansed by the sprinkling of blood.—We are to draw near,

(4.) Having "our bodies washed with pure water;" that is, our outward man also purged; that so, having clean hands, and a pure heart, we may ascend to the hill of God, and stand in his holy place, Psalm xxiv. A blameless outward conversation. Sin so curbed and borne down within, that it do not scandalously break out into the life; and this must be done with the pure water of the spirit of sanctification, not with the muddy water of Christless endeavours, as in painted hypocrites.—From this subject, I would take the following

Doctrine, That Christians may, and ought to draw near to God.

"Let us draw near." This is the voice of the gospel sounding in the ears of the visible church through our Lord Jesus Christ; and it is sounding in our ears more particularly this day, while he gives us the hope of his coming so near to us in the sacrament of the supper next Lord's day.

In this discourse, I shall attend shortly to the following things:—

I. Shew what is implied in this, "Let us draw near."

II. Shew that we *may* draw near.

III. Shew that we *ought* to draw near.

IV. Add the practical improvement of the subject.—We are then,

I. To shew what is implied in this, "Let us draw near." There are two things in it.

1. Sin has set us at a distance from God: Isa. lix. 2, "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." Sin indeed could not remove us out of the place where God is, for he is every where: but it has set us out of his favour, out of his friendship, and that is a sad out-cast. In Adam, while he stood, we lived in the land of light, the light of God's countenance; but he sinned, and was banished from the presence of the Lord, after he had run away from him with us in his loins; and so we come into the world estranged from God: Psalm lviii. 3, "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies."

2. Sinners stand at a distance from God till they be called, and that powerfully: John vi. 44, "No man can come unto me, except the Father who hath sent me, draw him." They keep their ground where their first father left them. The breach began on our side, we left our Father's house, and ran away from it without all just ground, but we never come back again till worthless *we* be sent for and fetched; like the Levite's concubine, Jude xix. 2, 3.—And here lies the case:

Insensible sinners will not: John v. 40, "And ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." They are away, and they will not come back. They have no eye upon the privileges of them that are near; they can do well enough without it. They love the devil's common, where they can ramble up and down at their own liberty, better than God's inclosure, where they think a man cannot get elbow-room. Hence they are running away farther and farther from him, till, I believe, not a few are so far from him, that they hardly ever hear from him; nor is there one left with them to disturb them in their wandering.

Sensible sinners dare not: Luke v. 8, "When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, Depart from me, for I am a

sinful man, O Lord." They see his glory and his seat, they admire the happiness of those that stand before him, as the queen of Sheba did the attendants of Solomon, 1 Kings x. 8. But they dare not draw near, but stand afar off, under a deep sense of unworthiness. Like the publican, they cannot lift up their eyes to heaven, but smite upon their breasts, saying, God be merciful to us sinners, Luke xviii. 13. They cannot conceive how such vile malefactors can face the Judge, how such prodigals can set their foot again in their Father's house, how such filthy, loathsome, beggarly creatures, can presume to come forward to the throne. If at any time they break forward, it is like offering violence to themselves. They take their life in their hand, and, like Esther, go in to the king, chap. iv. 16. And then the legs of their confidence tremble, the hands of faith shake, and they are ready to start back: but "let us draw near."—This brings us,

II. To shew, that we *may* draw near to God. Glad news this to poor sensible sinners! Come in, ye blessed of the Lord; why do you stand back? you may draw near to God.—For,

1. God is on a throne of grace in Jesus Christ: 2 Cor. v. 19, "To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." God has in Christ laid aside his red garments, being to pursue the war no longer against those that come to him through Christ. He wears the white garment of peace, and breathes nothing from hence, but peace, love, and good-will. To look on an absolute God out of Christ, is enough to make a devil tremble. You are not called to draw near to him as such. Indeed, some presumptuous sinners will, like beasts, touch the mountain; but darts of wrath will strike through their consciences, and drive them back at length. But you are to draw near to God, as on his throne of grace, in Christ.

2. There is a way to the throne never trode, nor designed to be trode, by any but sinners such as you, and the like of you. This is no back entry, but the most glorious way to the throne. Adam had a way to it, but that is blocked up; there is a new and living way consecrated for us, Heb. x. 20. And may we not draw near by it? It lies through the vail of Christ's flesh, and leads into the holiest, the seat of God! It is a way paved with glory to God, peace on earth, and good-will to men. It will vail all your weaknesses, wants and blemishes; yea, it vails the fiery law, wraps it up out of sight; it vails the sword of justice. The smiles of a reconciled God shine through it, to revive and refresh the hearts of the guilty.

3. He is a friend of ours who is set over the house of God: Heb.

x. 21, "And having an High-Priest over the house of God," that is Jesus Christ. He was taken out from among us, being "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh." Psalm lxxxix. 19, "Thou spakest in vision to thy Holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty, I have exalted one chosen out of the people." He is for us, in things pertaining to God, to employ his power and interest for us in the court of heaven. He bears the keys of the house, and admits whom he will, gives them what he will, brings as far forward as he will: John v. 22, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son." And he is a Priest, a High-Priest, who will take all our services, wash away all their pollution, and offer them for us with the much incence of his merits and intercession.—We now proceed,

III. To shew that we *ought* to draw dear: "Let us draw near."—For,

1. It is the command of God: James iv. 8, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." God commands runaways to return, and draw near to him. He commands returning sinners to come forward, and come near him. He gives them no thanks for standing afar off. Though he can bear with them long, yet he is not pleased when a sense of sin makes poor sensible sinners stand off from him as affrighted at him. His fatherly bowels yearn toward them: Luke xv. 20, "And he arose, and came to his father; but when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him."

2. If we do not draw near to God, we dishonour his Son, and so dishonour himself, in so far as we frustrate the great design of the mystery of Christ: John v. 23, "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which sent him." Eph. ii. 13, 14, "But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle-wall of partition between us." So far as we stand afar off from God, we dishonour the friendship of God, the blood of the Son of God in its efficacy and virtue, while we dare not trust ourselves in the new and living way and under the covert of the Redeemer's blood.—We now proceed,

IV. To a practical improvement of the subject, in an use of exhortation.

Let us, then, draw near to God. Return, sinners, and come back to God, ye who have gone away from him: and having come back, come forward to him in Christ, come forward even to his seat; the nearer you come the better, and always the nearer the more welcome.

1. Come back, sinners, draw near towards God and duty. What have you gained by going from him? Satan, the world, and lusts, made you fair promises to get you away from God. But what have you made of your rambling, wandering life through the mountains of vanity? You have got a restlessness in your hearts, a blindness in your minds, a deadness in your affections to what is good. You have got your lusts strengthened, and a conscience full of guilt and stings, when you seriously reflect. Our Lord is ready to take runaways home again; Jer. iii. 1, "Return again to me, saith the Lord." Ver. 22, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God." He is again casting open the doors of his house to receive backsliders; nay, his arms of love and mercy are ready to receive you. Come back, then, smiting on your breast, as grieved for that backsliding heart of yours; smiting on your thigh, as grieved at those wandering feet of yours, which have not continued in the paths of righteousness.

2. Not only draw towards God, but come forward, and draw near to him as a God in Christ. You may get near him ere you come to heaven; in his ordinances in the lower house, there you may have access to him. Particularly, let us draw near to him,

In prayer, Heb. iv. 16, "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." This should be a praying time with us, a time of wrestling for the blessing. It may be you have not neglected the form of prayer, but though God was near you in your mouth, yet perhaps he was far from your reins. But pray now, and draw near in prayer, press forward even unto his seat, with the arms of faith and love. Many have got very near him in that exercise; they have broke the shell on which many gnaw all their days, while they are never the better, and they have got into the kernel; like Jacob, they have succeeded: "He had power over the angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication unto him; he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us."

Draw near in the holy sacrament of the supper. God is again coming to us in that ordinance; an ordinance appointed for the most special nearness out of heaven: 1 Cor. x. 16, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" Here we may sacramentally touch his precious body and blood, and feed upon it. Oh! let us be sure to meet him there; he will not break the appointment. Let us draw near, draw by the vail with the hand of faith: whatever be betwixt him and us, let us closely unite with

God in his Son, and come even to his seat, come forward, for we will be welcome. But if we abide in the outward court, contenting ourselves with the bare elements, better we sit not down at this table.—Let us draw near in these ordinances,

1. As rebels accepting the King's peace, indemnity in the blood of his Son; draw near, and welcome: Isa. xxvii. 5, "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me." He holds forth the golden sceptre to thee, though thou deservest the iron rod. Start not back by unbelief. If it be too much for thee to expect when thou lookest to thyself, it is not too much for him to give; for he is infinite in goodness, and the blood of Christ purchased it for the undeserving; and the price of blood will not be kept back. Then, let us draw yet nearer,

2. As petitioners to the King. While God sits on the throne of his grace, he says to all who have accepted his peace, as Ahasuerus did to Esther, "What is thy petition, and it shall be granted thee?" Let us not, then, slight the season of petitioning. Be sensible of your soul-wants: labour to get desires of supply wrought in your hearts by the Spirit of Christ. And draw near with your petitions as particular as you can make them. Come, and welcome; though there be blots in them, they will be accepted out of the Mediator's hand. Nay more,

3. Draw near as servants of the house, to serve our Lord, to wait upon him, and behold his glory: Psalm cxvi. 16, "O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds;" Rev. xxii. 3, "And his servants shall serve him. And they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads." Though our ragged garments are very unlike our Master's honour, yet he allows us a livery in which to appear, of which we need not be ashamed, and which will cover all our filthy rags. He gives us white raiment, that we may be clothed, that the shame of our nakedness do not appear, Rev. iii. 18. Lay this over thy soul, wrap thyself in it, come thus forward, and welcome.—Draw near,

4. As friends; friends of God, to have fellowship with him, who may freely converse with him: to unbosom ourselves to him, and to be let into the secrets of the covenant: John xv. 15, "Henceforth," says he, "I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doth; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." He treats you as such, setting you down at his table; and the less reserved you are, and the more you improve the privileges through Christ, the more welcome you are. Does he approve the kneelers at the

sacrament, when he has ordered them to sit? as little will he approve the Christian's carrying froward-like, and standing afar off from him at that table which he has covered for his friends. Nay, draw near,

5. As children to a Father in Christ, to receive the portion of children. Is not the soul which hath closed with Christ a son by adoption? "To as many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." A child of the house by marriage with the King's son. Is not the children's bread given them at the table? Believe, then, and say to God in Christ, "Abba, Father." If he did not love the compellation from those that are his, his spirit would not put it into their mouths, Rom. viii. 15.—Draw near,

Lastly, As a spouse to an husband, for our Maker is our Husband. Let us embrace him in the arms of faith, give the love of the heart to him a full vent: Song viii. 6, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Rejoice in him, delight in him, and bless ourselves in our choice of him. The sacrament of the supper is appointed for that very end, that we may unite more closely with him, have more intimate fellowship with our Lord, and may joy in the blessed Husband, while at the feast of espousals. Think not strange of drawing near at this rate; for, if ever we come to heaven to be happy, we will be nearer than all this, nearer God than we can now conceive. The blood of God will be close cement betwixt God and his own creatures: and this is the only way of our nearness.

But how must the business of our drawing near to God be managed? The apostle here lays down four directions:—

(1.) Draw near to God sincerely. Hypocrisy is a disease in the vitals of religion; it pretends one thing, and intends another. The tongue and external behaviour in gospel-ordinances are no true interpreters of the hypocrite's mind. Beware of this: Matth. xv. 8, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me." If you be to take Christ, let those go away. If you join hands with him in this ordinance, join heart with him also. Seek out your sins impartially, and see if you be willing to part with them without exception: Psalm lxvi. 18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Consider and deliberate on the cost of the covenant, and see if there be nothing at which your heart stands. Consider if you be for Christ and his salvation, for his sanctifying Spirit, as well as his justifying blood. If it be thus, you may warrantably come

forward, even to his seat; but if otherwise, you will never get near to him.

(2.) Draw near in the "full assurance of faith." Faith's special object is the blood of Christ. Come leaning and depending on the merit and efficacy of this blood. Would you be wafted over to the presence of God, come swimming through that river which makes glad the city of our God. Cast all your weight upon it. It bears the weight of the Father's glory, and will bear the weight of your salvation. If your assurance of welcome depends on any thing in yourselves, God will cast the door of access in your face, as presumptuous insensible creatures. Labour to get your souls wrought up to a full assurance of faith, not doubting of your welcome to, and acceptance with him through Christ. Fix on the promise, he is faithful who made it. Though a trembling hand may reach a pardon, and God will not quench a smoking flax, yet it is more to the honour of God, the honour of the precious blood of Christ, and more to the sanctification, as well as comfort of the soul, confidently, without hesitation, to lay hold upon the promise, and apply it, with all that is in it: Matth. xxi. 22, "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

(3.) Get your hearts beforehand "sprinkled from an evil conscience." Are you to come to his table? pray that all controversies be done away between you and him. If you are to appear before the Lord, go, dip, wash, bathe in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, Zech. xiii. 1, that you may be clean. Take a backlook of your ways, and be not superficial in it, lest some unremoved guilt stare you in the face when you are coming forward, and drive you back. Do not think your repentance, reformation, vows, tears, (though of blood), will purge the conscience: only Christ's blood will do it; for this only can satisfy the demands of justice and of the law. Now, lay the weight of your remission on this blood, apply it to yourselves by faith, and this will purge your conscience. The sea of Christ's blood stands between us and the throne for that effect, Rev. iv. 6.

Lastly, Let your outward conversation be blameless, free from scandalous sins: Psalm xxiv. 4, "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully," is the person who shall ascend into the hill of God. Wash your hands in innocence, if you would encompass God's altar. Repent and mourn over the sins of the outward man, and apply to the same blood for pardon. Forsake and give up with those sins, whether against the first or second table; resolve, and endeavour sincerely to perform. Amen.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.*

SERMON XXXVIII.

HEB. x. 22,

Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

IT will afford a beam of surprising and heart-reviving light upon this text, to sensible sinners, if we compare it with that in Gen. iii. 22—24. Behold in these verses the fruits of the first Adam's sinning. Adam sinned, and we in his loins, as well as himself, were driven out from the presence of the Lord. Christ suffered, and we are drawn in again, and farther in than ever Adam was. Hear the sentence from Heaven casting us out: "Behold the man!" see what he has brought himself to, "he is become as one of us, to know good and evil." A holy taunt! "And now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live for ever." There is a deficiency in this speech, which is easily supplied from what follows: "Let us drive him out." But hear the voice from heaven calling in again the wretched outcasts. The apostle here, as one of the outcasts, manages the voice in effect thus, "Behold God, the second Person! he is become as one of us, has taken upon him our nature, to know by his own feeling, in some sort, the good we lost, the evil in which we are involved; and now, "let us draw near," let us come back, come in, come forward, nay, come near; let us not only put forth, but freely stretch forth our hand, grasp, and take of the tree of life; eat freely, abundantly, and live for ever."

O that the reverse may be carried yet farther! God sent forth the man, bade him go, but he would not: "So God drove him out." Now, God bids us draw near, but we will not come. May the Lord put forth his hand, and draw us in!

But here an inquiry occurs, How near may sinners come to Jesus Christ?

I. They may come into the house of God, ver. 21, "Having an High-Priest over the house of God." When Adam sinned, he was driven out of the house, as a divorced woman. The first covenant was broken; but now, that the new covenant is made, the divorced sinner, who is new-married to his Maker in Christ, may come in

* Delivered immediately before the dispensation of the sacrament.

again to the house. They may come to the lower house in ordinances; it is their own house; by that title, they may sit down at the table as in their own house: Isa. lvii. 13, "He that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain." They may come to the higher house, even heaven, this is the house in the context. They will come there at death, but the text aims at a coming to it before death; and therefore, this drawing near is a spiritual motion upon the wings of faith, carrying the soul out of the body to heaven as its own house, because it is Christ's house.

2. They come far forward in the house: ver. 19, "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." The temple stood east and west, the porch, or entry, being in the east. Without the house were the courts of the temple, in one of which stood the altar, before the porch of the house, in the open air. In the temple was a vail, which divided the east end, called "the holy place," (into which ordinary priests might go), from the west end, called "the holiest of all," into which only the High-Priest might enter once a-year. There was the ark, with the mercy-seat and cloud of glory on it: and it was a special type of the highest heavens, the high and holy place which is the glorious dwelling of God.

Now, I say, sinners may through Christ come far forward in the house, they may have Job's wish to come to God, even to his seat, Job xxiii. 3. Sinners, we have an altar, a crucified Saviour; if you desire to come into the house of God, come by that altar, and welcome, there is no other way; come into the holy place; nay, come forward into the holiest of all. Stand by no means only gazing on the vail, the vail of Christ's flesh, but come through the vail unto God, God in Christ; come even to his seat. God is in Christ as the cloud of glory on the mercy-seat in the holiest of all; come forward through the vail of Christ's flesh, sufficiently rent and torn in his sufferings, to afford you access through it to God, sitting on his mercy-seat in Christ, that you may be refreshed and comforted, your souls satisfied and sanctified with breathings of his love, with peace, and good-will from thence even through the wounds of our Redeemer. If this do not kindle in you a desire to draw near, what can we say to kindle it?

I told you last Sabbath that you *may* draw near to God in Christ, and that you *ought* to draw near, &c. Are there any here who so love their outcast condition, that they will not come back, nor draw near to God, though they are invited? Then I must leave you, to speak to others. But, before we part, consider,

1. What a miserable state you are in while far from God. As God said to Adam, Gen. iii. 9, we may say to you, "Where art thou?" Like the prodigal, Luke xv. 13, thou art in a far country, far from God, his covenant, his grace, his Christ, Eph. ii. 12. And while you will not come back, you are far out of your senses. Tell me, sinner, in sober earnest, (if you be capable of a sober thought,) Are you not in want? Is there not a principle of restlessness in that soul of thine, which thou canst find no way to quiet, but sometimes by the fulsome breasts of lusts which may surfeit, but at no time can satisfy? The dry breasts of the world, squeeze them as you will, can never give full content, still there is some thorn of uneasiness in your bed, make it where you will. Thou dost hunger after happiness, but shalt never find it till thou come near to God in Christ. —Consider,

2. If thou art able to hold on to the end without coming near to God. Though thou canst live this way, wilt thou be able to die in this state, and continue so for ever? Art thou still able to make thy part good without him, yea, against him, so that thou art resolved never to knock at his door? If not, thou art wretchedly foolish, to slight a kind invitation from him to whom at length thou must bow. Therefore, Isa. lv. 6, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near."—Consider,

3. If thou wilt not draw near now, the time will come, when God will drive thee from him with a vengeance, and will give thee thy heart's fill of distance from him for ever: Matth. xxv. 41, "Then shall he say to them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Now he bids thee draw near, and thou wilt not; this voice will draw to an end with thee, and thou wilt hear that other voice, Depart from me; and thou must go, though thou wouldst gladly stay. As, then, you would not be forced to depart for ever, draw near to God now, while he is drawing near to you.—Consider,

Lastly, That the access to God, now in your offer, will make your departure from him to hell the more dreadful: Matth. xi. 24, "It will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you." Ye are guilty of a sin of which heathens are not capable, nay, which devils cannot commit. They departed, but they never got a call to come back again. It was never said to them, "Let us draw near." There is a way opened, at the expense of the blood of Christ, for you to come back to God, and therefore your neglecting to improve it must be inexcuseable.

But now, as for you who desire to draw near to God, ye have a fair occasion at all times for it, there is a ready way from earth to

heaven, through Christ, wherever you are. You have a special occasion at this time in the holy sacrament, an ordinance in which the Lord comes very near to his people, in which the greatest nearness may be enjoyed. The sacraments and death resemble one another. In the former, the Lord comes to us, in death we may go to him. We should labour so to manage the former, as that a sure foundation may be laid for safety and comfort in the latter. Here God appears on a throne of grace in Christ, the vail of Christ's flesh appears sacramentally rent, that you through it may draw near to God. And you must by faith pass through the vail this day, that you may get forward even to his seat, drawing near him as rebels accepting the King's peace, the offered indemnity through the blood of his Son, drawing near as supplicants, as servants of the house, to serve our Lord, to wait upon him, and behold his glory.

In these circumstances, your question, I presume, will now be, How shall we so manage this approach, as that it may be successful for the honour of God, our soul's good for time and eternity? If you manage right, you are made up for ever, and therefore your mismanagement will be an unspeakable loss. I shall farther explain unto you the apostle's directions in the text. I fear the hints already given to you as to the nature of drawing near to God, may not be sufficient to clear you in this matter; therefore, that ye may not walk in the dark, know plainly, in a word, that we draw near to God by faith, and our believing in God is our drawing near to him. Hence the apostle's advice in the text is not, Come in by faith, for this is the very coming itself, but, says he, "in full assurance of faith." So the scripture explains it, while it shews that that coming to the Lord, which is so much pressed on sinners in the Old and New Testament, is believing: John vi. 35, "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life; he that cometh unto me shall never hunger, he that believeth on me shall never thirst." How does the sinner depart from God, but by unbelief? Heb. iii. 12, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." Therefore it is by believing we draw near (*Greek*, come) to God. This is the great uniting grace which joins a sinner to the Lord while in this world. How can we come to God, but by believing? for this drawing near is a spiritual motion of the soul. Our souls indeed move towards God in spiritual desires; but if these be not completed by faith, which is the comprehensive motion, the soul still stands off from God. So also in love, this is set a-going by faith, and its motion is towards God, when the soul is brought near to God by faith: 1 John iv. 16, "And we have known and believed the love that God

hath to us. God is love; he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."

Now, the object of faith is Jesus Christ held forth in the word of the gospel, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily, that is to say, God in Christ. See the sum of the gospel, 2 Cor. v. 18, 19, "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the mystery of reconciliation: to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." Faith does not stand still in the vail, that is, his flesh, but goes through the vail, Heb. x. 20, to the Godhead, that is, within it, and there, only there, it rests, or can rest. Now, the persons of the Trinity being one, he who believeth in Christ the Son, believeth in the Father and the Holy Ghost: John xiv. 9, "He that hath seen me," said Jesus, "hath seen the Father." More particularly, that you may take your aim right in this matter, I think drawing near by faith lies in three things, namely,

1. It lies in accepting God for our God in Christ. I say in Christ, for no other way have we him offered to us, nor can a soul in any other way accept him; out of Christ he is a consuming fire. Thus, from the mercy-seat in Christ he offers the covenant, which faith accepts: Heb. viii. 10, "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws in their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." And there, even in Christ, the soul takes him for its God, and gives itself away to him: Isa. xliv. 5, "One shall say, I am the Lord's, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." Thus the sinner is joined to God in Christ by a marriage-union: Isa. liv. 2, "For thy Maker is thy Husband." (*Heb.* thy Makers is thy husband). 2 Cor. vi. 16, "For ye are the temple of the living God: as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people;" and then we are near indeed.—Drawing near by faith lies,

2. In claiming God for our God in Christ. This is the very proper work of faith: Psalm xvi. 2, "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord," at all times, but especially at a communion-table. What says the Lord to the soul then, but as he did to Thomas? John xx. 27, "Be not faithless, but believing." Let us draw near, then, by faith, and answer, ver. 28, "My Lord, and my God." Faith has the word of the everlasting covenant to bear

it out in its claim; it has the Redeemer's blood, which is the blessed cement to knit a believer to a holy God. In the sacrament, the body of Christ, in which dwells the fulness of the Godhead, is really and truly presented to their faith, by and with the sacred symbols. Is any thing more natural than that faith should claim as its own the gift which is thus put into its hand?—Drawing near by faith lies,

3. In improving according to our necessities, for time and eternity, the interest in God thus claimed, is in Psalm cxix. 94, "I am thine, save me," and throughout that psalm. Thus the soul feeds by faith, when persons suck in the sap of the fruits growing on the tree of life, when by faith they sit under his shadow; and this plainly lies in confidence and trust in our God for all, according to his word. It lies in believing the promises of the everlasting covenant, founded and ratified in the blood of Christ; not as devils may believe them, namely, that they shall be made out to some person, but believing them with application, namely, that they shall be made out to me, believing over the belly of devils, and all the mass of vileness, filthiness, and unworthiness, which hangs about me. Believers should say, as in Gal. ii. 20, "I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," &c.

It is the two last of these, I think, that the apostle here chiefly aims at, supposing the first as the attainment of his Christian Hebrews.

In discoursing farther on this subject, I intend—to offer some directions—to propose some cases and questions, and to offer suitable answers.

As to the directions, I begin with this:—

1. "Draw near with a true heart" to God. If we come not with the heart, we do not come to God in a suitable manner. To draw near to God, is soul-work, heart-work; if, therefore, we come not with a true heart, we come not at all to him. A false heart in the matter of covenanting to God, is no heart, is at best but a half-heart to it; and this is no heart in God's account: Prov. xvii. 16, "Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart in it?" If you have not a heart for God in Christ, you will not get near him. Before Julius Cæsar was murdered, having slain a fat ox for a sacrifice, the heart was not to be found among the entrails. That communicant in whom a heart for the Lord is wanting, will doubtless be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord this day. Heartless sacrifices involve murder. A true heart is not a sinless heart, but a sincere heart. Let us draw near, then, with a sincere heart. Sincerity is not a single grace, but it is the sum and soul of all the graces. Take it away from faith

itself, and it is but a dead grace, as in Simon Magus, and those in John ii. 23, 24, "Now, when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast-day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself to them, because he knew all men." Sincerity is like the string in the beads about a person's neck; when this is broke, then they fall all to the ground. We need not, however, seek this truth of heart through all the graces, for it is principally the truth of faith which is here meant; it is believing, which is in its nature our drawing near to God; and so it may be explained by what you have in Rom. x. 9, 10, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Poor soul! if thou be coming back to thy great Master, though even laden with the stolen goods you ran away with from him, though you dare not say you are an honest servant, yet if you dare say before the Lord you are honestly returning back again, then we may say to you, Draw near, and welcome.—But here, perhaps, some will propose this

QUESTION. In what does the truth of our drawing near to God, or the sincerity of faith, consist? For answer, I would observe a few things.

1. The soul draws near to God with a true heart, when it comes to God only in the true way, through the rent vail of Christ's flesh; that is, when the soul has no confidence in believing, but in the blood of Christ; Phil. iii. 3, "For we are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." The person will stop eyes and ears, and say, I cannot look on God but as in Christ, I desire to hear none other, I have nothing whatever of my own to recommend me to Christ. Though perhaps the beggar-raiment of their reformation of life, what they have done and suffered for the cause of Christ; their earnest prayers, deep exercise, bitter tears for sin, and the like, look as well, and probably better than those of many of their neighbours; yet they dare not for their souls bring a rag of them with them, to cover or commend them before the Lord; but they leave them, yea, flee out of them, and from them, as absolutely naked, to the Lord Jesus himself, to get a covering under his righteousness.

2. The soul draws near to God with a true heart, when, upon a discovery of the glory of the Lord, it is thus subdued to this obedience of faith: Psalm cx. 3, "Thy people shall be willing

in the day of thy power;" when the practical understanding casts the balance on the Lord's side, so the heart says, "He is better to me than thousands of gold;" or as in Phil. iii. 8, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, my Lord;" in a word, when the soul draws near to God, to take up its everlasting rest in him, as its portion, to take him for all, and instead of all. With the heart man believes, when the person takes God for his God in Christ, not only for a rest to the conscience, that it thus may be quieted in him, but also for a rest to the heart, that thus it may be satisfied in him; and the person can accordingly say, Farewell, vain world; farewell, sinful lusts; farewell, empty creation; welcome, welcome, God in Christ, for a covering to mine eyes, and a rest to mine heart: Psalm lxxiii. 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee." The gospel holds out Christ as the only satisfying portion; faith first believes this testimony, then embraces him as such. They who are only acquainted with terror as dealing with them, may be driven to God, but do not draw near to him with a true heart.—To illustrate this, I would propose the two following cases:—

Case 1. What will become of those, then, who are driven to the Lord by terror? Answ. What becomes of a ship which is drove into an undesirable harbour by stress of weather? When the storm is calmed, she even leaves it, and puts to sea again, as you see in Psalm cvii. 24—30. Terror may begin the work, which a willing choice may crown. The poor soul may be like Noah's dove, drove away to the ark by a restless conscience; but when it comes there, the Lord may open a window, by which it may get such a view as to be drawn into it, though it was before only drove. Though the storm at first drove thee to the harbour, yet if thou be now captivated by the beauty of the place, so as that you are heartily resolved to make it the place of thy abode for ever, in fair weather or foul, and would, with a thousand good-wills, that the vessel was burnt, that so you might never be in hazard of going again to the sea of this world; all is well, you are welcome to the shore of Immanuel's land: Hos. ii. 14, "Therefore, behold I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her."

Case 2. But, alas! I cannot purge myself of backwardness in coming to the Lord. Answ. Is that backwardness truly the burden of your spirit? do ye loathe yourself on account of it? Our Lord allows you to draw near with your burden on your back. The great Physician knows his patient comes to him with heart and

good will, though his sickliness makes him come very slowly, drawing, as it were, his legs after him: Matth. xxvi. 41, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Psalm lxv. 3, "Iniquities prevail against us: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away."—I now go on to observe,

3. That the soul draws near to God with a true heart, when it comes to him for sanctification, as well as justification, to be freed from the reigning and indwelling power, as well as from the guilt of sin: 1 Cor. i. 30, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." This is the sign of that heart which is a true heart, a heart truly divorced and alienated from sin, though the poor soul cannot be wholly freed from it; an heart true to the great end of the mystery of Christ, his death, and his sufferings, which was "to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Tit. ii. 14;—true to the great end of all gospel-institutions, Acts xxvi. 18, "To open their eyes, and turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith in Christ Jesus;"—true to the great end of faith, which is "to purify the heart," Acts xv. 9; true to its own best interest, and the honour of God, which commences in time, and terminates in heaven in likeness to God: 1 John iii. 2, "But we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." When this is obtained, the mystery of Christ is finished. Whosoever come in any other way, come with a false heart. They who have only use for the blood, and not for the water, which came out of Christ's side; who do not heartily desire universal holiness, but wish to conceal some secret morsel under their tongue; who come to God to bind themselves to holiness, if he will but save their souls, and pardon their sins, as if they could make themselves holy, if he would but make them happy; the faith of such persons is but a dream.

Thus the truth of faith is made out, the soul draws near with a true heart; for thus it comes away from self, the world, and sin, and draws near to God in Christ, and thus obeys the gospel-call.—As another direction, I would mention,

2. "Draw near to God in full assurance of faith." Are you put upon the right road, having a true heart? then advance forward, without doubting or wavering. Is your heart true? let it next be wrought up to full assurance, for in this lies all the importance of this second advice. It is a metaphor taken from a ship, carried with

full sail before the wind. And thus, sinner, if, after you and I have been tossed up and down in the sea of this world, (a world lying in wickedness), by violent lusts, unsatisfied desires, and wearied out with disappointed expectations, yet after all could never find in it where to rest our foot, nay, not so much as sure anchor-ground for our hearts, but still an unfathomable depth of emptiness presenting itself to us, and now have at length discovered the port and harbour suited to give rest to a weary soul, even God in Christ, have our eye on it, and are steering our course straight towards it, let us spread out our sails, let us draw near with the full sail of faith, as our text might be read. This I would consider as more particularly directing us to these three important points.

1. To a taking God for our God in Christ freely.

2. To a claiming him for our own God boldly.

3. To an improving our claim of interest in him confidently, and without hesitation.

These I shall in their order a little enlarge upon. I say, then, that to draw near to God in full assurance of faith, is,

1. To take God for your God in Christ, without doubting of your welcome. Stretch forth the hand of faith, that ye may join hands with an incarnate God: the more vigorous that your aim be, you will take the better hold. Do not stand at the door, disputing and doubting whether to go forward or not? if you cannot loose doubts, cut them with the sword of faith, and leap over them, Matth. xv. 24—28. It is none other than Satan, and an unbelieving heart, which entertains the sinner before the vail, with disputes and doubts whether to go through or not. And if these can hold them up with that discourse till the door be shut, as it will soon be, they have their design. There are, without question, good grounds for this full assurance of faith;—such as,

(1.) God, in his infinite love and mercy, has suited himself for an approach by such as you. Had he intended to keep you off, he had only to have kept himself in his unvailed glory, and the rays of it from afar would have struck the guilty soul through with a thousand arrows, and kept him off for ever. But he has vailed himself with our nature, and that for us: Heb. x. 19, 20, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh." Has he put on the vail, then, that guilty wretches may draw near him? Has he rent the vail of the flesh of his own Son in his crucifixion, that a door might be opened through his wounds to come to God? Has he done all this in vain? If not, why will you doubt your welcome through this new and living way?

(2.) God's justice is satisfied, his honour is provided for, so that justice has nothing to object against your putting your hand to this claim. It is absolutely consistent with the honourof God to be thy God in Christ, for the man that is the Father's fellow has done all this by his blood; and therefore the angel's song begins with glory to God in the highest; after that follows peace on earth, and good-will to men, Luke ii. 14. Hear the sacramental words, 1 Cor. xi. 25, "This is the New Testament in my blood. Is not the blood of the everlasting covenant sufficient to assure you? Is not the covenant in which God offers himself to you as your God, drawn with the blood of God? Behold, then, the blood of the covenant, and no more doubt your welcome.

(3.) You have his word for it. Kind invitations are breathed out to you from the throne of grace in Christ. Hear the tenor of the covenant, Heb. viii. 10, "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." See how it is offered unto all to whom the gospel comes, Isa. lxv. 1, 2. John vi. 37; Rev. xxii. 17. Nay, you are commanded to accept it: Luke xiv. 23, "Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." 1 John iii. 23, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." Many are in other cases disputing, and doubting themselves out of their duty, but here salvation lies at stake. Will you, then, doubt your welcome to obey the command of God?

(4.) You must take God in Christ for your God, or you are eternally ruined. Debate the matter as long as you will, this is the course you must take, or the wrath of God will lie on you for ever. Miss this hold, and you sink assuredly into the bottomless pit: John iii. 36, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Now, if you must do it, it is weakness and folly not to do it with full assurance of faith. If a drowning man must seize a rope to draw himself to land, does not common sense say, the firmer he seizes it, he is the more safe? If the hand tremble, and be like to let go the hold, will he not wrestle against death? So, in like manner, should we, with full assurance of faith, keep our hold of Christ, and thus draw near to God.—But here some may propose a

Question, How may we be helped to this full assurance of faith in taking God for our God in Christ? As to this I answer, Stedfastly believe the doctrine of the gospel, which is the mean which

the Spirit makes use of to beget and increase faith: Rom. x. 17, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." And therefore still hold by the word. I apprehend, if we would search to the root of the doubts, fears, and uncertainty in the matter of believing in Christ, we would find the root of most, if not all of them, is an error in the first concoction, an uncertainty as to the doctrine of the gospel. Therefore labour to be fully and feelingly assured of the doctrine of your lost state by nature, on the testimony of the word. Begin there, and ply your faith as to this doctrine. It is easiest, because an unenlightened conscience even goes along with it; but if I believe my lost state upon the testimony of that word, I am helped the rather to believe the way of my recovery on the testimony of the same word.

Believe ye, then, with full assurance, that you are in yourselves guilty creatures, bound over to the wrath of God for time and eternity, and that by no means ye are able to remove that guilt, by all that ye are capable to do or suffer? Believest thou this? It is gospel-doctrine, Eph. ii. 3, "And were by nature the children of wrath even as others." Again, Do you believe that you are altogether corrupt and unholy, and are utterly unable to make for yourselves either a holy heart or life, that you are no more able to subdue a lust, than to procure yourself a pardon, that the breaking of the power of sin is as far above thy reach, as the removing the guilt of it? Eph. ii. 1, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Do you believe the doctrine of salvation through Jesus Christ, held forth in the gospel? You cannot believe in the Lord to salvation, but as you give an assent to this doctrine by faith. This is the bottom on which faith proceeds, when laying hold of God in Christ.—Do you believe, with full assurance, that there is no way to make miserable man happy again, but by the enjoyment of God as his own God? O for the full assurance of this! it would effectually determine those who are hanging on this day about the world's door, and that of their lusts.—Do you believe that there is no other way to come to the enjoyment of God as our God, but through Jesus Christ, who was crucified without the gates of Jerusalem? Acts iv. 12, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." If so, his name would be precious. Do you believe that there is no way to be saved from guilt, but by his righteousness, and from pollution, but by his Spirit?

Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that he took upon him man's nature, and suffered in it to satisfy the justice of God, that he might thus by his blood bring sinners again to God?

to enjoy him as their God? Eph. ii. 13, "But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." —Do you believe that the blood of Christ is the blood of God, and that therefore it is a cement truly sufficient to knit or join a holy, just God, and any guilty sinner whatsoever, who comes unto God through him? This is gospel-truth: 1 John i. 7, "And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."—Heb. vii. 25, "Wherefore he is able also to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Believest thou this? If thou believest it not, how can it be expected that thou shouldst draw near to God, seeing the only way of access to God is to thy unbelieving heart not sufficient to bear the weight of a guilty soul? If thou sayest thou dost believe, then, to try this, I would ask thee, Dost thou believe that this blood is a cement sufficient to join thy guilty soul, even thine, to God? to bear thy weight, who perhaps thinkest there was never one upon it with such a load of guilt? If not, then thou dost not believe the doctrine of the gospel, Heb. vii. 25, already quoted.—If thou dost believe all this, then,

Do you also believe, that whatsoever guilty sinner will come to God through him, may have the benefit of that sufficiency of his blood, that is, that God shall be his God, that he shall have the righteousness of God, even God-man, to cover all his sins, the Spirit of Christ to sanctify him, and make him like God? This is gospel-truth, Isa. lv. 1—3. Rev. iii. 18, and chap. xxii. 17. Do you believe this? If not, you cannot draw near to God indeed; it cannot be expected that you, who give no credit to his word, will venture on himself.—But if you say you do believe, then dost thou also believe, that if thou comest to God through him, thou, even thou, shalt have this benefit? If thou stoppest here, then I do not know but devils go farther in believing than thou dost, namely, to believe this general proposition, without excepting so much as thee. But thou, monstrous dishonourer of the blood of Christ, and the truth of God, read thy sin, tremble, and repent: 1 John v. 10, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." But if thou dost, with full assurance, believe this, then what remains, but that thou draw near with full assurance of faith? Take God in Christ for thy God, without in the least doubting of thy welcome.—This drawing near with full assurance of faith, is in its nature,

2. To claim God in Christ as your God, without doubting of your title. Having taken him as your God, do not stand debating whether or not he is yours; only believe, believe he is yours: Jer.

iii. 4, "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?" What the better will you be of him, if he be not yours? John i. 12, "But as many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." I must content myself at this time, only to offer two or three things on this exercise:—As,

(1.) When thou takest God for thy God in Christ with a true heart, canst thou doubt thy title, without dishonouring the blood of Christ and the truth of God? For these two do secure it. Dost thou not so far dishonour him, who is set over the house of God, when he has given thee the benefit of the covenant, even himself, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells, if thou doubtest of thy title to them, for so thou dost in effect question his commission and right. Glorify the Son of God, then, and honour the infinite virtue and merit of his blood, by claiming God as your God upon this ground. I know we are apt to think, we do but doubt the truth of our taking God in Christ as our God. But do we doubt of the offer? Do we doubt of our soul's saying amen to it on any terms? Do we not? Take heed, then, that the doubt run not upon another ground, whatever our unbelieving heart may suggest.

(2.) When thou dost sit down at the table of the Lord, thy soul hungering for Christ, the bread and wine are given thee by his ministers in his name and with his own words, "This is my body," &c. dost thou believe these words? If thou dost believe them, thou darest not, with many profane spectators and communicants, also look upon these sacred symbols as naked signs of Christ's body and blood, but must believe, that by, and with these signs, the body and blood of Christ, which were never separated from his Godhead since they were first united, are really and truly exhibited, and given to thee to thy faith, and thou receiving the same in faith, art as really made partaker of his body and blood, as thou art of that bread and wine: 1 Cor. x. 16, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" What, then, should hinder thee to claim God as thy God in Christ, without doubting of your title, when you have a sealed gift of him made you by his authority before the world, angels, and men?—This drawing near with full assurance of faith is in its nature,

3. To improve your interest claimed, without doubting of success. Feed with a fear of circumspection; but the less unbelieving fear, the better. This you are to do still in the way of believing, believing the promises, without doubting of their being accomplished to you for time and for eternity, for grace and glory: Matth. xxi. 22,

"And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Rely on the word of grace, the covenant in his blood, that for as poor and mean as you may appear this day, ye shall be pillars in the temple of God, seeing he hath said it; for as black and deformed as you are this day, ye shall shine as the stars for ever and ever. Is there a lust or lusts you would have subdued; believe, with full assurance of faith, the promise suited to that case, as in Mic. vii. 19, "He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." And so in other cases.

What way can one imagine we should suck the sap of these promises, but by believing them, and so relying and trusting on the Lord according to his word? The heavenly treasures contained in them are unseen things, they are known to us only by the testimony of the word, and the inward sensation which they experience upon believing them. How, then, can we think to get the benefit of them, but in the way of believing them? Suppose some rich prince beyond seas, who can, nevertheless, at any time convey his treasures hither, should find means to get proclaimed among a company of poor people here, that whosoever will take him, and him only, for their provider, shall be seasonably and suitably supplied out of his treasures. They never saw the prince, they know nothing of his treasures, but by the testimony of his word sent to them. The heralds commend the prince, they aver it is the surest way of supply to those who are poor. Some of these poor count these things idle tales, and go their way, one to his day-labour, to earn a penny, another to the begging through the country. When the supply comes to the country, have these any ground to expect a share? No; they did not believe his proclamation. But as for those who were so foolish in the eyes of their neighbours, but so truly wise, as to believe the proclamation, and venture their supply upon an unseen provider, and an unseen treasure, it lies on his truth and honour to see them abundantly supplied. I shall no further apply this, than to say, that God's truth and honour is most undoubted security; Rom. ix. 33, "As it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling-stone, and rock of offence; and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."

To conclude, think not that I have been teaching you to presume, nay, but to "draw near with a true heart, in the full assurance of faith;" not to lay aside humility, for the greatest humility is to deny ourselves, and obey the call of God, though it be an high calling. It is not humility, but unbelief, which is the spring of the true heart's doubtings in drawing near to God. They are but warts and

moles in the face of Christ's bride, and so far mar her beauty; though he does not cast her off for them, if faith do but peep, as it were, out among the crowd of these deformities, as if she could see only with one eye: Song iv. 9, "Thou has ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck." Matth. xiv. 31, "And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith! wherefore didst thou doubt?" The rule is, "According to thy faith, so be it unto thee." So, little faith, little comfort; but, what is worse, little faith, little sanctification. Amen.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.*

SERMON XXXIX.

HEB. x. 22,

Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

IT is by no means only at a communion-table that we are to draw near to God, but also in all other parts of his worship; yea, in the whole of our conversation we must be drawing near, and keeping near to God, till we at length appear before him in heaven: I say *keeping* near: for certainly, the text points not merely to a drawing near, just for a start, and away again; but it is to draw near to the house over which Christ is set, as a house where we are to abide; and it is such a drawing near, so as not to draw back.

You may remember, I told you, drawing near to God is by faith, and that this lies principally in three things. 1. Accepting God as our God in Christ. 2. Claiming God for our God in Christ. 3. Improving, according to our necessities, for time and eternity, the interest in God thus claimed. Ye have had two directions offered for the right managing of this: 1. That you should draw near with a true heart; 2. With full assurance of faith; which I explain to consist in, (1.) Taking God for your God in Christ, without doubting of your welcome; (2.) Claiming God in Christ as your God, without doubting of your title; (3.) Improving your interest claimed, without doubting of success. I spoke upon the first of these three largely,

* Delivered, June, 1715.

namely, the taking God for your God in Christ, without doubting of your title. Upon the other two, little was said. I shall now speak to a case which I shall propose, and so proceed.

CASE. How shall I know that I have drawn near to God in Christ with a true heart, and sincerely taken him for my God in Christ? ANSW. The difference between the true and false heart in this point, may be discerned in the following particulars, viz:—

1. The false heart draws near to God, as a neighbour only, as it were, to pay a visit, stays a little, and then goes its way again: Isa. xxii. 16, "Lord, in trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them." The hypocrite never takes up his everlasting rest in God. Though he leaves his own house to come to the house of God, yet he leaves his heart behind him; and so he cannot stay. With the mixed multitude who came out of Egypt, Num. xi. 5, "They remember the fish which they did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick;" and they found the retreat to go back from whence they came.

2. The true heart draws near to God in heaven, as the new-married wife comes home to her husband's house to dwell there all her days, never to go back again to her father's house: Psalm cxvi. 7, "Return to thy rest, O my soul! for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." It was a custom among the ancient Greeks, to burn, at the bridegroom's door, the axle-tree of the coach in which the bride came home, to shew she was never again to go away; and if ye have drawn near to God with a true heart, taking him for your God in Christ, I will not say that the axle-tree of the chariot in which you came to God is as yet burnt to ashes, but sure I am, there is a fire set to it; and if it is once set in a flame at the door of the house of your new Husband, it is so because you had no mind to go again back. And whether this be so or not, you will know,

(1.) By the smoke which will be rising there. There will be a threefold smoke rising at the door of the house you have come to, if the axle-tree be on fire, and you have determined not to go back again to your former house.

[1.] There will be the smoke of fear as to drawing back. I mean not a faithless fear, which seizes those who look to the duties to which they are bound, but not to the strong God, whose strength is engaged by covenant to his people, for the performance of them. This is the fear which takes heart and hand from people, making the heart quiver, like a candle burnt to the socket, till at last it expires with a stench. This is the smoke of a fire from hell, blown up with hard thoughts of God, and of the sweet yoke of Christ, Matth.

xxv. 24, 25; Rev. xxi. 28. It is the forerunner of apostasy; but there is a fear of circumspection in the true heart, in opposition to that self-confidence with which hypocrites are blown up: Prov. xxviii. 14, "Happy is the man that feareth alway, but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief." He trembles to think of going back from God, has a horror at the thought. He walks softly and warily, as one afraid to be taken off his feet; and he holds the faster, the more he sees his hazard.—There is,

[2.] The smoke of self-loathing, for former sins and departures from God: Ezek. xxxvi. 31, "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities, and for your abominations." They that are near will remember with self-loathing what they were when they were far off: Psalm lxxiii. 22, "So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before him." They who have not seen their wretched case while at a distance from God, they go back again quickly; for the sore that is not sufficiently probed, though scurfed over, will break out again.—There is,

[3.] The smoke of dissatisfaction with the corrupt nature, in that there should be so much as a principle of back-drawing, the least inclination in them to go away: Rom. vii. 24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" They will be looking with an evil eye on the corruption of nature, which makes them capable of departing, and will be longing to be beyond the reach of temptations to depart from the Lord.

(2.) You will know by the flame that will be rising there. There being a live coal from the altar, there will be a threefold flame.

[1.] A flame of love to the house they have come to for the Master's sake, Luke xxiv. 29, 32. The glory of that house cast open by the blood of Christ, darkens all created excellency with them, so that their hearts say, "This is my rest." Psalm lxxiii. 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on the earth that I desire beside thee." They are like the servant, Exod. xxi. 5, who, from love to his master, would not go out free. They have made choice of God in Christ for their God; and when they reflect on the bargain, they do not repent their choice. If they had it to make a thousand times, they would not alter.—There is,

(2.) A flame of desires, desires to stay: Psalm cxix. 10, "With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments!" They see Satan and a corrupt heart standing ready to yoke, to carry them back to their father's house again; but they are persuaded in their hearts, while they are with God, they are where they are better, yea, where they are best; and they

desire not to go back, they desire to stay, and therefore are denying the suits of ungodliness and worldly lusts, which would carry them back, Tit. ii. 12.—There is,

(3.) A flame of hatred against the fashion of their father's house: Psalm ci. 3, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes; I hate the work of them that turn aside, it shall not cleave to me." They loathed them, they therefore left them, and came away from them. They do not love them, and therefore hate to go back to them. They have abandoned the sweet morsel, and abhor to take it up again: Psalm xcvii. 10, "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil; he preserveth the souls of his saints, he delivereth them out of the hands of the wicked." Those fashions wounded their consciences, defiled their souls, grieved the Holy Spirit, contradicted the law of righteousness; therefore they hate them.

Thus, you see, those who have drawn near to God in heaven, have determined to abide there. They have taken God as their God, to abide by, and with him for ever. And hence we may conclude two things in regard to them.

1. That they are no more people of this world. Heaven was cast open to them by Jesus Christ, a way was made for them into the holiest of all, and they have drawn near by this way to God in Christ, to abide there. It is indeed true, they are yet in the world, but they are not any more of it, they are chosen out of the world, John xv. 19. Though their bodies be still in this world, their souls have by faith taken wing, have left this for that world, which is not seen, and have got in within the vail.—Thus it is, for the god of this world is not their God. They have renounced the devil, no more to serve and obey him to their ruin, but to resist him as their enemy, and the enemy of their God. They are to have an irreconcileable war with him, till he be bruised under their feet.—The world's portion is not their portion, 1 John ii. 15, 16. They look beyond things that are seen, which may fill the hand but can never fill the heart. They seek after profits more solid, pleasures more pure and sweet, than the world can afford. They will not, like the men of the world, cry, "Who will shew us any good?" Psalm iv. 6: but as answering Christ's call, Song iv. 8, "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse." What others take upon their back, yea, place in the chief room of the heart, they put under their feet, and are fighting with it, that they may overcome it. The way of the world is not their way: Rom. xii. 2, "And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." To be only neighbour-like, is not their religion. They are pilgrims and strangers in the world,

who will be distinguished by their way from the natives. For they who take the way of the world must perish with it.

2. They are people of another world, they are of that world where life and immortality reign. They have had access into heaven while on earth, and they have drawn near to it by faith. Wonder not at this, for if there be a soul here who has drawn near to God with a true heart, in the full assurance of faith, and taken God in Christ for their God, they may well be said to be in heaven, and to be creatures of another world. For,

(1.) Their Head is in heaven, even Jesus Christ, who is as really united to the believer, as the head of a living man is to his body. There is as real an union and communion betwixt Christ and them, as betwixt the head and the body: Col. ii. 19, "He is the head, from which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." This union the Spirit descending from Christ, and faith ascending from the true heart, constitutes; and this the sacrament seals.

(2.) Their heart is in heaven, for their treasure, their stock, and portion is there: Matth. vi. 21, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Their heart is divorced from the world and their lusts, it is away before them, in some measure, to the place where they themselves are to be for ever. They have got a view of the glory and treasures of the upper house, and after these their souls are breathing.

(3.) Their life is there for Christ is there: Col. iii. 3, 4, "For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory." Their principle of life is the Spirit of Christ, by whom they live. It is a hidden life indeed, hid from the world, often from themselves. They see not their dignity, it doth not yet appear what they are, but as really as they have taken God in Christ for their God, the Spirit of Christ dwells in them. And hence their life can never be extinguished, for it lies not in the grace of God within them, but in that without them in Christ.

(4.) Their hand is in heaven, even faith, that long arm of the soul, by which it can reach from earth to heaven, even to his seat; for by it, as was shewn, we draw near to God. Faith penetrates through the vail and rests not, till it rests in God himself, who draws near to us in his word, the word of the everlasting gospel.

(5.) Their conversation is in heaven, Phil. iii. 20. They are citizens there, their great trade is there. The King of heaven is their King, their Lord, Head, and Husband; and so they wait their orders from heaven, and do not take up with every thing which offers, accord-

ing to the inclinations of their own corrupt hearts. The laws of heaven are their rule, for they are put in their mind, and written in their inward parts, Heb. viii. 10. They are not disposed to do as others do but to hear what the Lord says to them. The word from heaven is their oracle, with which to consult in all their way. Their hope and expectation is from heaven. The work of heaven is their work, which is, to serve and to do the will of Christ's Father which is in heaven. —So much for the first thing, taking God for your God in Christ, without doubting of your welcome.—The

2. Thing in drawing near with full assurance of faith was, That having taken God for your God in Christ, you claim him as such, without doubting of your title. I give two observations on this, but it is too weighty a point briefly to pass over. It is a pity that a believer should so long stand afar from God, with his wishes, O that he *were* mine! and that he should not draw near with full assurance, and say, He *is* mine in Christ.—To promote this exercise, I would have you to attend to the following considerations:—

(1.) God allows you to claim him as your God. Satan, and an unbelieving heart, may contradict the claim, but God will never do it. The covenant runs in these terms, "I will be your God," Heb. viii. 10; and will he ever resist you when you plead his covenant? Did he not allow Thomas, formerly an unbeliever, to claim this, and say, "My Lord, and my God?" John xx. 28. Seeing, therefore, you may do it, it is folly to slight such a glorious privilege.—Consider,

(2.) That God is well-pleased with you if you make this claim: Jer. iii. 4, "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?" Is not a father well pleased to hear his child call him so? God is more loving than any father or mother upon earth. Though they may forget, yet he will not forget us, Isa. xlix. 15, 16. The Son of his bosom, who best knows what pleases him, teaches us to pray, Our Father; his Spirit, who searcheth the deep things of God, teacheth the children to cry, Abba, Father. It is true, that he is not pleased when carnal professors claim him as their God, Hos. viii. 2, 3; Psalm l. 16, 17. But why should the children start back from their food, because the dogs are boasted away? If you are casting off the thing that is good, and are hating instruction, I am not advising you to call him Father; but you have taken him in Christ for a rest to thine heart, to make thee holy, as well as happy? then claim him as thy God: Hos. ii. 23, "And they shall say, Thou art my God."—Consider,

(3.) That the saints of God, in former ages, have claimed God as their God: Psalm xvi. 2, "O my soul! thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord."—Song ii. 16, "My beloved is mine, and

I am his." And it is the usual way of scripture-saints, to plead their interest in God by faith. These things are written for our imitation. I observe the saints in scripture not only claiming God as their God in the sunshine days of their prosperity, but also in deep affliction; when the hand of God lay heavy on them, they expected good from him: Psalm xlii. 6, "O my God! my soul is cast down within me, therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." Was ever any more afflicted than Job, tempted even by his friends to quit his claim? yet he resolutely maintained it. The saints have done this also in deep desertion: thus, Psalm xxii. 1, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The 88th Psalm begins with a believing claim. Why should it not be so, seeing afflictions and desertions are the trial of faith? nay, what is more, they claim God as their God in the time when sin, guilt, and backsliding, are staring them in the face, Ezra ix. 6—10; for this opens the heart to kindly sorrow for sin, while unbelief locks it up. When the claim is altogether given up with, the heart may be broken into a thousand hard pieces, but it will never melt into godly sorrow.—Consider,

(4.) That this claim honours God. Abraham was strong in faith, giving glory to God, Rom. iv. 20. Faith honours the blood of Christ, the blood of the everlasting covenant, when the soul, over the belly of felt unworthiness, claims God as its God upon the title given by this blood. It gives Christ the honour of the infinite virtue, value, and efficacy of his blood. Faith honours the truth of God in the promises of the gospel, when the soul, in view of the infinite disproportion betwixt God and his sinful creature, yet on the credit of the word, puts in its claim to God himself.—Consider,

(5.) That it is in the strength of faith by which persons draw near when taking God as their God, but they come still nearer when claiming them as such: Job xiii. 15, 16, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. He also shall be my salvation." The stronger that the man is, he holds the harder, and the stronger that faith is, it comes the farther forward in the house of God. When Thomas got in his fingers, he cried, "My Lord, and my God," John xx. 28, for then his faith was as a giant refreshed with wine.—Consider,

(6.) If you dare not claim God as your God, how will you claim any benefit of the covenant? There is guilt lying on your soul, you come and claim a pardon; there is a lust too strong for you, you claim strength against it; in difficulties you seek light and direction. Now, how can you claim any of these, if you claim not God himself as your God? Can a man who has no claim to a woman, claim the benefit of a contract with her? "I will be their God," is the great pro-

mise of the covenant, on which all the rest depend; give up your claim to this, and you can lay claim to none of the rest. If God be not your God in Christ, you have no right to pardon, peace, strength, &c.—Consider,

Lastly, That faith greatly advances sanctification. Faith is the great promoter of holiness. Acts xv. 5, 9, "Purifying their hearts by faith." So the more faith which a man has, he will be the more holy; and with the more full assurance that he can claim God, he has the more faith, and so will be the more sanctified. Thus it is certain, that that claim which does not advance holiness, is but a delusion; for the claim of faith is still of this nature, Psalm xvi. 2, 3; Exod. xv. 2, "The Lord is my strength and my song, and he is become my salvation; he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation: my father's God, and I will exalt him." This is a great gospel-truth; I shall not launch forth into it now, but only mention you three things upon it.—I observe,

(1.) That the way to attain true holiness is, by drawing it from its fountain, God in Christ, Heb. viii. 10; 1 Cor. i. 30, "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." There is a bastard sanctification, consisting of some acts of external obedience, wrought out of our own natural powers; but true sanctification is by improving those treasures of holiness which are in Christ, or God in Christ: John i. 16, "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." Now, how can we improve or make use of those treasures which are in God, if we cannot claim him for our God? But if we cannot claim him as such, we can come boldly to his throne to find mercy and obtain grace to help us in time of need, Heb. iv. 16. If the soul can say, God is mine, then may the person say, Light, life, and strength, are mine, the promises are mine. They may suck freely at the breasts of all the gracious promises on record. In a word, when the soul can claim God by faith, it can come freely to him for sanctification, and improve him for that end.—I observe,

(2.) That love to God is the fulfilling of the law; and the more love, the more holiness. Now, to claim God in Christ as our God, is the true way to attain true love to God; for it is faith which sets love a-going. Faith worketh by love, and so it sets all the graces of the Spirit in motion. *Mine* is a kindly word; though you live in a cottage, if you can say, It is mine, it will be sweeter to you than the king's palace, because it is not yours. See how the love of God is kindled in the breast of a guilty creature, 1 John iv. 19, "We love him, because he first loved us." It is a hard work (to

say no more) to love a God not believed in, not embraced as our God; for the greater and more glorious he is, he is the more dreadful an enemy. It is the word of the gospel which brings the glad news of the love of God in Christ. Is it not plain, then, that the more this be believed with application, the more will that love to God be inflamed, and consequently the soul more satisfied.—I observe,

(3.) That our hearts must have something of their own to satisfy themselves with. The greater part of the world hang on about the door of the empty creation, and suck the breasts of their fulsome lusts. Why do they this? Because God is not theirs, and they cannot want altogether. But let the heart once take God in Christ, and claim him as its own God, then it has enough. And the more the soul is persuaded of this, the less it will care for other things, but says, in effect, "I have all, and abound." A man will keep in his candles, if he be not persuaded the sun is up; but if the windows be opened, and he sees the shining sun, he puts out his candles, he needs them no more.—Our heart has that piece of prudence, that it must fasten one foot before it loose another; and therefore, according as the claim to God is stronger or weaker, the claim to the world and lusts will in like manner be proportioned.—Here I would propose, and say a word or two to three cases.

Case 1. I am afraid of presumption. Answ. Draw near with a true heart, press only through the vail to make your claim. Claim for a rest to your soul, and for sanctification, as was said before, and there is no presumption. Have you taken him as your own God? Avow your claim to him as such: dishonour not God by casting a cloak of pretended humility over your unbelief.

Case. 2. But can such an unworthy creature as I make such a claim? Answ. If you will not, then I hope you will not claim pardon, grace, or heaven: but you will, you must quit your claim to all these at once, for you must not think to claim these from a God that is not yours in Christ. Will you then, without reluctance, quit your claim to all these? If not, then claim him, though unworthy. Why talk of unworthiness? Will you ever be worthy of him? No, no; the claim of faith is over the belly of felt unworthiness, and founded on the blood of Christ alone.

Case 3. I would have claimed God in Christ as my God, and I even did it; but Satan has got advantage already of me, and I had to quit the hold. Who ordered you to quit your hold even in that case? Not God, I am sure; for he saith, Heb. x. 35, "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompense of reward;" therefore it has been Satan and your own unbelieving heart.

And are you not in a poor case for rising up again out of the mire now, when you have let go hold of God, as your God in Christ? This is not the way to rise, your best course is, to act faith again, and renew that claim which you have formerly made, for grace, in order both for justification and sanctification, Ezra ix. 6; Psalm lxv. 3; Jonah ii. 12.—I now come to the

3. Thing in drawing near to God with full assurance, which was, that you improve your claimed interest for all your necessities, without doubting of success. Christ has opened heaven to you; and if you have come in through the vail, taken God in Christ as your God, and claimed him as such, he would have you to be familiar in his Father's house, and want nothing which is there suitable to your condition; but to put out the hand of faith, with full assurance, that you are as welcome to the heavenly treasures as the blood that purchased them can make you: and that is, welcome to the full. I doubt not but this is the import of the text. Poor empty creature, thou canst not subsist without communion with heaven; but thou must drink of the fountain, before thou canst meddle with the streams; himself must be thine, before the least article of the furniture of the house can be thine; therefore thou must take God in Christ for your God, then you must claim him, and, having claimed him, be familiar with him, and all that is his, in the way of believing.—In explaining this, I shall shew,

I. How the believer should be familiar in the house over which Christ is set, and thus draw near with full assurance.

II. Why he should be so familiar.

1. We are to shew, how the believer should be familiar in the house over which Christ is set, and thus draw near with full assurance.—Upon this I observe, that he should,

1. Come and tell him all his wants freely, without concealing any thing from him, for this would argue distance and distrust: Song vii. 11, "Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages." Faith has a most enlarged desire, it is always in want of something, and its work is to beg, to take freely without money and without price; and for that reason it is pitched upon as the great mean of communion betwixt God and sinners; Rom. iv. 16, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed." And the stronger faith is, it spreads out the more wants, and spreads them out the more freely before the Lord, as to a friend. Do you want any thing as to which you cannot tell the Lord? It argues either no real need, or else little faith. Strong faith is a free communer in heaven, and will conceal nothing, but tell all: Eph. iii. 12, "In

whom we have boldness and access, with confidence, by the faith of him." (Boldness, *Gr.* telling all).—He should,

2. Come and seek all he needs, without blushing: Heb. iv. 16, "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may find mercy, and obtain grace to help in time of need." Faith coming in within the vail, comes into a friend's house; and the more free and familiar it is there, and the less reserved, the more welcome. There are two seekers that do not blush before the Lord in their asking: 1. A proud unhumbled heart, whose sense of need is very small; and these, for their shamelessness, get the door cast on their face: 1 Pet. v. 5, "For God resisteth the proud." Luke i. 5, "And the rich he sendeth empty away." 2. A strong faith, whose sense of need is very great, which drives away the unbelieving blushes out of the face; and such shamefaced seekers never get a denial in heaven: Luke xi. 8, "Yet because of his importunity, he will rise and give him as many as he needeth."

There is a blessed shamelessness in faith with full assurance; it makes persons very familiar in God's house. It can come there at any time, it keeps no set hours, it can step forward at midnight, (Luke xi. 5,) when doors used to be shut, and knock at the gates, without fear of giving disturbance. It was a dark night to Job; God had drawn a sable covering over the face of his throne to him; yet faith goes forwards, and draws it by, Job xiii. 15, 16, (quoted above). See also Isa. lxiii. 15, 16. It can plead the relation of a friend to the master of the house. The believer stands in many relations to the Lord, and faith fixes on that relation which will serve its plea best. If the soul be under particular necessities, where it must have a friend's help, the soul will claim the help of God as its friend, notwithstanding the infinite disproportion between the relatives. And in this case, it can be very full in its demands: Luke xi. 5, "Lend me three loaves." Possibly less might serve a friend on a journey, who is to tarry only a night, but strong faith is not to be dealt with scrimply. It must have what will be enough and to spare, for it desires to be more than a conqueror.—Faith thinks no shame to complain of an empty house at home, Luke xi. 6, and that it has nothing to set before this stranger. The report faith brings to heaven, is still of emptiness, for they that live by faith are always from hand to mouth, and never want an errand to the God of heaven for some supply or other.—Finally, It can confidently borrow, without one word of paying again. See the whole of our Saviour's parable, the design of which is to recommend importunity at the throne of grace, Luke xi. 5—10. This is the way of faith's trading with heaven, without money in hand, and without price to

be paid. For faith just involves the soul in the debt of free grace, and can trade at no other market, for no other is suited for the bankrupt family of Adam.

3. He should even put out his hand, and draw to him, by believing the promises suited to his case, and this with a faith of application: Matth. xxi. 22, "And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive them." It is the business of faith, to read the person's particular name in the general promise, and to fill up his own name in these promises, which are, as it were, God's blank bills and bonds, and then come forward with them even to his seat, with David's plea: Psalm cxix. 49, "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." And this without doubting. They can never be familiar with heaven, who stand afar off from the promises.—Thou shouldst believe that the promises shall be made out; they are the words of truth, which shall have a certain accomplishment. And though the unbelieving world take them but for fair words, thou takest them for sure words, which are full of mercy, and shall not miscarry, but shall surely be accomplished at the set time:- Psalm xii. 6, "The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times."—Again, believe that they shall be made out to thee. What canst thou be the better of a salve not applied to thy sore, or of a promise which is not applied by faith to thy own soul. It is by the faith of application that these breasts of consolation are sucked, and that the water is drawn out of the wells of salvation. And what other way can we be partakers of the sap which flows from them, but by thus believing, as was before shewn. And for this cause it is necessary to be well acquainted with the Bible, and to mark the promises, that whatever be thy case, thou mayest have a word suited to it to plead with God, for the word is that by which influences are conveyed. And seeing much lies in believing and applying the promises, take these two notes to clear your way in this exercise.—I observe,

(1.) That whosoever receives Christ, and takes God for his God in him, has a right to all the promises of the covenant suited to his case, and has a right to apply them. They meet all in Christ, for "all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us." And so all of them may be claimed in him, even as he who marries a wife may plead all that is promised with her in the contract. It is with him that God freely gives us all things, Rom. viii. 32. Take Christ, then, and the promise is yours in him.—I observe,

(2.) That the promises are made primarily to Jesus Christ;

Gal. iii. 16, "Now, to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." He is the second Adam, the great contractor with the Father in the covenant of grace, and through him to all who are his, even as the promise of the first covenant was to Adam, and his seed in him. And they were made to him on condition of his satisfying the demands of the law, which is now done; so that, with respect to us, they are all absolute and free; properly speaking, none of them are conditional. Some of them describe the qualification of these to whom they shall be accomplished, as Matth. v. 3—10, which qualification is, however, wrought in them, in accomplishment of the leading promises, the promises of grace, such as Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." But both the one and the other are pleadable only through Jesus Christ, being through him made absolute to those who are his; so that in Christ you have a right to all that is suited to your case. Hence it is that promises, made to some particular saints, may be confidently applied by others in their circumstances, as growing all upon one root, which is our common Lord. Thus, God said to Joshua, chap. i. 5, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee; I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." He says to every believer, Heb. xiii. 5, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

Lastly, He should hang on about the Lord's hand till the supply come, and that confidently. This is that which in the scriptures is celebrated under the name of trusting, relying, staying on the Lord. The whole weight of all our wants is to be laid over on the Lord, and a confident expectation maintained, that he will supply them, according to his word. Trust reposed in a generous man is a strong tie on him to help and answer expectation. Lot, Gen. xix. 8, would have any ill done to himself rather than to his guests, because, says he, "for this cause they came under the shadow of my roof." And they that trust in the Lord according to his word, shall never be ashamed. Thus, the believer should be familiar in the house over which Christ is set, and in this way draw near with full assurance.—Let us now,

II. Shew why the believer should be so familiar in this house, improving his claimed interest for his necessities, without doubting of the success.—He should be so,

1. Because heaven is made home to him by the blood of the Son

of God, and therefore no reason to doubt of welcome, Heb. x. 19, 20. That is a kindly word, which you have in John xx. 17, "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended unto my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." It is our Father's house because it is Christ's Father's house; and where may one be familiar, if not in their Father's house? It is the house prepared for them first by Christ's satisfaction, then by his intercession: John xiv. 2, "I go to prepare a place for you." It is the house their Lord and husband is set over; it is the house they came of, for they are born from above; and it is the house they are to dwell in for ever, nay, the Lord himself is their home: Psalm xc. 1, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations." The Jewish doctors called him *place*, because the only resting-place of the soul is in God, and to believers he is unquestionably their rest.

2. It is a pleasure to have full breasts sucked. The breasts of grace and goodness in God to sinners through Christ, are full, there is nothing wanting, faith has only to suck, and to be satisfied. It is applied to the church, what you have in Isa. lxvi. 11, "That ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory." The breasts are, as it were, held forth in the word of the gospel, which is our great privilege. There is all fulness in Christ, the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth in him, that so sinners might have access to God through the vail of his flesh, and be filled with all the fulness of God. The fulness in him is not the fulness of a vessel, to serve itself only, but the fulness of a fountain to be communicated, which still gives, and yet has enough. Well may we, then, draw near to God with full assurance of faith.—We should be thus familiar; for,

3. This is the great end for which sinners are at all brought to God through Christ, namely, that they may partake of his fulness. It is the great end of all the promises: 2 Pet. i. 4, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." The communication betwixt God and man was interrupted by Adam's fall; it is opened by Jesus Christ, that influences from heaven may run freely, and that in him they may get all their wants made up. They may be assured of a cordial welcome when taking for their necessities these things which are brought in for this very end, that they may be supplied.

4. The Lord offers himself in the gospel for all, and the sinner who takes him aright, takes him for all, and instead of all, Matth.

xiii. 45, 46. Now, if he offer himself for all, surely he intends that his people should improve their interest in him for all. He has taken them from all their former friends; surely, then, as an affectionate husband, he will allow his wife to be familiar in his house, and take it very ill if she hang on about others for a supply of her wants. This familiarity our Maker, our Husband, allows us, and approves of.

5. Our Lord (if I may so speak) makes very familiar with his people, and this is a sign that he would have them to be so with him. Lodge they ever so meanly, he will lodge with them: Isa. lvii. 15, "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." He not only gives them, but he takes from them; what provision from heaven is with them, he takes part of, though he needs nothing from them: Song v. 1, "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!" He sometimes even will take from them what they would not part with to any but himself, and they will make him welcome to it, as he did with Job, chap i. His sheep, asses, children, were taken from him, and little at all was left him. And if they act like themselves, they will rejoice that they have any thing, liberty, life, &c. to part with to him. But sure I am, the best of the saints can never so freely part with any thing to him, as he does to them.—They should be familiar; for,

Lastly, They who use most familiarity with the Lord, improving their claimed interest, with greatest confidence, come best speed at this throne: Matth. xv. 28, "Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Little faith is a narrow vessel, which brings in little from the fountain; but great faith brings in much. Whatever the Lord's people may think of their doubtings of the promises, the word of God never speaks a good word of the believer's doubts: Matth. xiv. 31, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Doubts are not pleasing to God, for they shew the weakness of faith, and always in less or more contain some reflections on the blood of Christ, the truth and gracious nature of God. Augustus admitted the common people with their petitions so pleasantly, that it is reported he reproved a certain person, telling him that he presented his petition to him, as if he had been giving a halfpenny to an elephant. Humility may well consist with the confidence and full assurance of faith.

Now, to conclude all this, ye who have taken God in Christ as your God, learn this holy art of living by faith, claiming your interest and improving it for all your necessities. Alas! sirs, for what end have we taken God in Christ for our God, if we do not live upon him? John vi. 57, "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." Why have we professed to enter into the house of God, by embracing the covenant, if we do not improve it for all we need? Improve, then, the claimed interest for all; and particularly,

1. For a rest to your consciences. Here David found a rest to his, when death and guilt together stared him in the face: 2 Sam. xxiii. 5, "Although," says he, "my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow." If God be thy God, the righteousness of God is thine to cover thee, the righteousness of Christ God-man. Thou art within that vail where the fiery law is closed up in the ark, and cannot reach thee. Confessing, mourning, repenting, are blessed and holy exercises, well becoming the child of God, and the more faith, the more of these, and the deeper will they be; but they, after all, are wholly insufficient for a rest to the conscience.—Improve the claimed interest,

2. For a rest to your hearts: Psalm cxvi. 7, "Return to thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." Have you come to God through Christ? then rest thy heart in enjoyment of him. Is the world smiling on thee? beware, rest not on it, thou wilt soon find thy rest broken, thou wilt never rest soundly in the embraces of a smiling world, for the bed is shorter than thou canst stretch thyself upon. Is the world frowning? Are the cisterns dried up? thy created pillars taken away? Yet despond not, faint not, while God remains, Hab. iii. 17, 18. You who have taken God for all, you have a poor bargain of it, if you have not as much as can make you live without those things which may be taken from you. Look to your stock in heaven, look to the glorious promises; he who overcometh shall inherit all things.

Lastly, Improve it for sanctification, to be holy, as God is holy, to get strength for duty, and against corruption. Draw in your furniture for a holy life, from the fulness of him that filleth all in all. Believe, that you may be holy. Take, by faith, the promise with you, when you use the means of holiness. They know little of the property of faith, who use it only for the pardon of sin; it is the instrument of sanctification, as well as of justification: Acts xv. 9, "Purifying their hearts by faith." If a lust is to be subdued, or a

temptation resisted, &c. faith must run thy errand to heaven. Believe the promise of sanctification with application to thyself, believe it with full assurance that it shall be made out to thee; and in that confidence use the means appointed of God for thy sanctification, and so thou shalt succeed.—If any of you have set about gathering evidences for heaven, and have got them, these things may help you to keep them, and to increase them. Amen.

THE SAINTS GOD'S SERVANTS AND HIS PROPERTY.*

SERMON XL.

Acts xxvii. 23,

For there stood by me this night the angel of the Lord, whose I am, and whom I serve.

There are two questions which may be pertinently proposed to every one of you after this communion; and he who can satisfyingly answer them, as Paul here does, and every child of God may do, it will be a pass which will carry him safely and comfortably through the world, by sea or by land, at home or abroad, among friends or enemies, and even at length into heaven.—The first question is,

Whose are you? Man, woman, to whom do you belong? Are you Christ's or Satan's? Are you still your own, or are you the Lord's? Are you a child of God's family, or of the devil's? What countryman are you? Are you from above, and do you belong to the Lord of the better country? or are you from below, and do you belong to the god of this world? What say you to this question, Whose are you?—The second question is,

What is your business? Certainly you have some business or other, you are either well or ill employed. What is your occupation? What course of life do you follow? What is the great design upon which you are set? Are you serving the devil, yourselves, your lusts? or are you serving God? What say you to this question, What is your business?

Paul, in the text, and in a few words, answers these two questions. He told those whom he addressed, that he was God's and that God's service was his business; that his Lord and Master had sent him a very comfortable message in the dark hour which was now come

* Delivered June 15, 1715, the Sabbath after the dispensation of the Sacrament.

upon them.—He was now in a ship, with many others, sailing for Rome; but a storm rises, continues many days, and all hope of being saved was taken away. Paul, notwithstanding, is easy and cheerful: he brings good news to them, that there should not one life be lost in the cause. And, in the text, he shews them on what grounds he went, namely, that of divine revelation, by the ministry of an angel.—You may here observe, that God's word of promise is sufficient security and encouragement in the darkest hour. The storm still continued, and was to continue, they were to make a narrow escape, the ship was to be lost: but amidst all this, the word of promise kept up his heart; and he had good reason for maintaining his confidence.

God is unchangeably true to his word. He cannot alter it, it shall not fail: Numb. xxiii. 19, "God is not a man that he should lie: neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? There is an impossibility of his word failing: Tit. i. 12, "He is God that cannot lie." So that faith has the surest bottom on which to stand, when standing on the promise, namely, the unchangeable truth of God.—There is nothing so difficult and hopeless, but God can bring it to pass: Luke i. 37, "For with God nothing shall be impossible." Therefore he is able to make good his promise, though all creatures should conspire to render his working ineffectual, and whatever difficulties may be in his way.—In one word, the experience of the saints in all ages confirms this confidence: Psalm xii. 6, "The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified." Many and various have been the trials of the saints, but they all held by the promise, and have at length set to their seal that God is true.—From this we may learn,

That their salvation is secured, who have been graciously brought within the compass of the covenant and the promise of salvation, "This," David said, "is all my salvation and all my desire," 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. Though they be in this world as on a boisterous sea, where the waves of indwelling corruption, temptation, affliction, desertion, are threatening to swallow them up; yet they shall get safe ashore; and though the body fall in pieces by death, the soul shall arrive safe in Immanuel's land.—If it should be inquired, How may a person know that he is brought within the compass of the covenant and promise? I answer, If you have truly and honestly come to Christ, and laid hold of him in the covenant, taken him as he offers himself in the gospel, if you have given up with all other lovers, and have taken up with him in all his offices, with a view to free you from the guilt, from the power and pollution of sin, all is well;

for he has said, John vi. 37, "All that the Father giveth me, shall come unto me; and him that cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out." Possessing him as the chief benefit of the covenant, you have all: 2 Cor. i. 20, "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us."—We may further learn,

That it is true wisdom to live by faith in the promise of God, whatever storm be blowing: 2 Cor. v. 7, "For we walk by faith, not by sight." You must lay your account with storms. Never was there one in a ship, except the man Christ, whom the devil would more anxiously have drowned, than he would have done Paul at this time. But Paul is easy, even when on the boisterous sea, on the promise of God, while the rest were in a terrible alarm; Satan was not so much set against them. Unbelief and discouragement can in no case be useful. It is good to believe, whether we be tossed with a storm of raging corruption, as in Psalm lxv. 3;—strong temptations, as in Luke xxii. 31, 32;—heavy affliction, as in Psalm xxvii. 13;—or desertion, as in Psalm xxii. 1. Thus much for the connection.

In the text, Paul declares to the ship's crew, who for the most part were pagans, two things:—

(1.) His intercourse with heaven: "There stood by me this night the angel of the Lord." (2.) His special relation to the God of heaven: whose I am, and whom I serve." The design of this declaration was, not only to comfort them, but to commend his God unto them, that they might also choose him for their God and master. No doubt, in these days, ver. 20, there had been many prayers in the ship. They had called to their gods, but in vain; Paul had cried to his, and had got a comfortable answer. He thence takes occasion to represent him as the God of salvation, who was able to make them all safe, notwithstanding the storm; as the Lord of angels; as one whose servant himself was, who was now so cheerful, when they were so dejected. Proper methods these to commend his God to them.—I would accordingly take occasion to observe, that it is the duty of those who are the Lord's, to commend their God to others, that they in consequence may be prevailed on also to be his. There are two strong bonds to bind this on those who are the Lord's—There is,

1. The love and duty they owe to God, who has done so much for them, and who would have all men to be saved. It is the more for the honour of God in the world, the more there are who join themselves to his service. This is an acceptable thing which we can do for God, to express our thankfulness, namely, to make conscience of

discharging our duty, to lay out ourselves in advancing the interest of Christ and of religion in the world: that since he has brought us into his family, we exert our endeavours to bring others also into it. —Another bond is,

2. The love and duty we owe to mankind: Rom. xiii. 9, "If there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Those who are yet strangers to God, are our fellow-creatures, lying in the ditch of sin, swimming to the ocean of wrath, in which condition we also were before we were the Lord's; which requires from us a very serious concern to help them out of that state, Tit. iii. 1, 2, 3. And this is as natural as it is for one that has narrowly escaped drowning, to bestir himself to help his fellow who is in hazard of perishing.

The use and improvement I would make of this is, to call upon you, O Christians and communicants! whosoever of you are the Lord's, to put your hand to this work, to recommend Christ and religion to others. You that are come out from among the devil's family, make it your work to prevail on others to come away also. Remember the Samaritan woman, who told her neighbours of Christ, and invited them to come to him: John iv. 29, "Go thou and do likewise."—To stir you up to this work, I shall lay before you the following motives.

Mot. 1. What use are you for in this world, if you be not useful for God, and your generation, in this work to which you are called? If you will do nothing for God, you but take up room on God's earth, and cumber his ground. The children of God are not so situated. They say, "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: Whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."

Mot. 2. It is a dangerous thing to be an unprofitable servant in God's house; Matth. xxv. 30, "And cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." An unprofitable tree may stand safer in a wood than in an orchard; and what is quite unfit for the master's use, is fuel for the fire.

Mot. 3. It is the nature of true grace, and has been the practice of the saints, thus to lay themselves out for God and the good of others. Grace is communicative; it is a well of water, from which many may be refreshed; it is a holy fire to warm others. Accordingly, we find Abraham's grace working thus, Gen. xviii. 19, "For I know him," said God, "that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do jus-

tice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." Thus also, we find David's grace, Psalm xxxiv. 8, "O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him." Thus also the spouse's grace, Song v.; the woman of Samaria, John iv. 29.

Mot. 4. You would thrive better yourselves, if you were more employed in this work: Prov. xi. 25, "The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered himself." The spring runs, and the fire burns, the more freely that they get a vent; and they that use their talents thus for God, are in the high way to increase them: Matth. xxv. 28, 29, "Take therefore the talent from him, and give it to him that hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance." A cold heart, without zeal for God's interest, and a sealed mouth, which cannot open for God, produces a back-going withered condition.

Mot. 5. It is well laid out work. For either sinners are gained by it, as it often falls out: Song vi. 1, "Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? Whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee." In this case the work is an abundant reward for itself: James i. 27, "Pure religion and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction." But it shall not go so; for every soul thou doest good to, shall be as a jewel in thy crown: "They that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever." Thou wilt gain the blessing of those ready to perish; and if thou shouldst not gain thy point, yet thy work shall not be in vain; Isa. xlix. 4, "Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God."—But here some who are under difficulties may propose this

Question, How shall a person manage this duty? I answer, Follow after the copy we have in the text, in these three particulars:—

1. Speak to the commendation of him and his service. The world have mean and low thoughts of God; speak to his greatness, that the souls of others may be awed by it; to his goodness and loving-kindness, that their souls may be stirred up to love him, hope in him, trust him. Speak to the advantage of his service, how comfortable, pleasant, and beneficial it is, Psalm xxxiv. 6, 7, 8.

2. Prudently communicate your experiences of his goodness to you. Tell what you have seen, heard, tasted, and felt of him, that others may be excited to wait on him. Tell it to those who are absolute strangers to God, when there is any hope of thus doing them

good, as in the case of the text; but otherwise we must beware of casting these pearls before swine. Tell it to fellow-Christians who need to be strengthened: Psalm lxvi. 16, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." And tell it even to those who see no beauty in ordinances: Zech. viii. 23, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold, out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."

3. Confidently avow your choice of God and his service before the world. Let them see that you have made your choice, and do not repent it. Say, with Joshua, chap. xxiv. 15, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The being ashamed of confessing the Lord and his way before an evil generation, does much hurt to religion; but a confident profession is a practical testimony to it.—To these three may be added,

4. A conversation becoming the gospel, and those principles which you possess.—In the text,

The *first* thing we have is Paul's intercourse with heaven, his communion with God: "There stood by me," &c.

The *second* thing is, Paul's special relation to the God of heaven: "Whose I am, and whom I serve."—We begin with the

First thing in the text, Paul's intercourse with heaven, his communion with God. "There stood by me this night, the angel of the Lord."—In this several things offer themselves to our notice, which we shall shortly explain.—There is,

I. The party employed to bring him the comfortable message from God: "The angel of the Lord."

II. The peculiarity of this manifestation and intercourse with heaven.

III. The posture of the angel: "He stood."

IV. The time of this manifestation: "This night."

Let us then attend,

I. To the party employed to bring him the comfortable message from God: an holy angel, who appeared to him in the ship. This was often the privilege of the saints in the Old Testament, and sometimes in the New, in the first times of it. We are not, however, now to expect such appearances. The sacred volume is completed, and we are not to expect new revelations. Angels are employed to serve for the good and benefit of those that are the Lord's. We know little of the ministry of angels, but the scriptures are plain, that this is the privilege of all who are his: Psalm xxxiv. 7, "The

angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." Heb. i. 14, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation." And the angels being invisible, we know not how much we are indebted to them for their ministry; we will know it better afterwards, when we will be in no hazard of abusing it.

The improvement I would make of this is, to point out the dignity and advantage of the children of God. King's children have honourable attendants; these, however, are only men. But if thou be a child of the family of God, angels attend thee. They have a concern for thy welfare, to promote it, as devils are trying to hinder it. And these angels will attend thee,—during thy life in this world. The scripture is plain, that God gives his angels charge concerning those who are his, to keep them while in the way. It is a promise of the covenant that has been sealed to us: Psalm xci. 11, 12, "For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." As a father of a family charges the elder children with the care of the younger ones; so does God the angels, with the saints on earth, the young heirs of glory; and they diligently execute their charge, however little we know about it. This appears from the scriptures already quoted.—The angels will attend thee at thy death, they will wait on thy soul removing from the body, and convey it away home to your Father's house in glory: Luke xvi. 22, "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." When the child comes out of its mother's belly into this world, some inhabitants here receive it, and take care of it; and when the soul of a believer comes out of the body, and is born into another world, the angels, inhabitants there, take it, and convey it away to their country. This honour have all the saints.—Let us attend,

II. To the peculiarity of this manifestation and intercourse with heaven.—"The angel stood by me." They were all in the same ship, but none knew what passed between the Lord and Paul; none saw nor heard the angel but Paul himself. And two things are here remarkable,

1. There were many strangers to God in the ship; but Paul was his own, and with him God keeps communion; but with none of them, though in the same ship with him.—Whence observe, that there is a secret conveyance of intercourse with heaven to those who are the Lord's, in the midst of a crowd of persons who know nothing of the matter. Many a time matters go on betwixt God and a gracious soul, as betwixt Jonathan and David, when they only knew

the matter, 1 Sam. xx. 39. The Lord knoweth who are his, and who are not, however mixed the multitude may be, 2 Tim. ii. 19. Whatever fair appearances a hypocrite puts on, he can see through the disguise; and however iniquity prevail in his own, he can discern the pearl of faith and love in a dunghill of corruption. The arrow is shot at a venture, but the Spirit of the Lord directs it. Communion with God and intercourse with heaven, lies in inward, not in external things: 1 Tim. iv. 8, "For bodily exercise profiteth little, but godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Every person might see who went to the table, what visible thing was done there, who received the bread and wine. But what passed in the retirements of the heart there, whose spikenard sent forth the smell, who received Christ into their hearts, whose faith and love were exercised, with whom the idol of jealousy was preserved, or who put the knife to the throat of it: the whole is a secret betwixt God and the soul itself.—The improvement of this is, to learn, that it is a sad thing to have been where that intercourse with heaven was, and to have had no share of it; to be persons whom God goes by, and comes by, manifests his grace on the right hand, and on the left hand, while they have no share of it. We have no ground to doubt but communion with God was enjoyed by some in that church-yard, and at the Lord's table. O! what was your share of it? If you have had none, it is a token, either that you were dead in your sins, and in a state of alienation from God, and not come out of the devil's family, though you were by profession among God's children: Amos iii. 3, "Can two walk together, unless they be agreed?" Dead folk cannot converse with the living, nor dead souls have communion with the living God. Habitual estrangement from communion with God, is a black mark of a graceless state, 2 Cor. vi. 16. Let that stir you up yet to come out from among them, and leave the congregation of the dead, while yet there is hope.—Or it is a token, that ye were asleep, and all out of case for communion with God. And if that was the case, O but it was ill-timed! Song v. 1, 2. Ye have slipt a precious season, ye know not if ever it may return. Review, therefore, your carriage and way at this occasion; awaken timeously, and repent, else you may come to get an awakening stroke from the Lord, which may go very deep: 1 Cor. xi. 30, "For this cause many were weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."—Learn to bless God, be thankful, and walk worthy of your privilege, you who have had the distinguishing mercy of communion with God. To whom much is given much also shall be required. Did he bring you into his banqueting-house? Then follow on in the way of holiness, as strengthened by what you have

experienced. Let not his grace bestowed on you be in vain. Here a question may be proposed, How may a person know whether he had communion with God or not? Answ. Communion with God consists in the Lord's vouchsafing the influences of his grace to the soul, and the soul's returning them again in the exercise of grace. There are many marks of grace. I offer you two distinguishing ones from the text.

Mark 1. The soul's giving itself wholly to the Lord, without exception of any thing, and standing to it: "Whose I am." People may give their hand, tongue, many things of theirs to the Lord, but none but these who have communion with him, will honestly give themselves wholly, without exception of one lust, or one cross, to him; and being deliberate, they stand to it. This is an evidence that the Lord has given himself to them, and they have received him by faith; for man's heart will never give their all to the Lord till it receive better.

Mark 2. Has religion now become your business? "Whom I serve." Have ye truly renounced the service of the devil, and of lusts, taken on the yoke of Christ in all its parts, making religion no more a by-hand work, to serve yourselves of it, but your chief work, your continued work, to serve the Lord in it? If you have had these, you have had communion with God; if not, you have not had it.—To this some may reply, But, alas! I have not had what I would wish to have been at. In answer to this, consider what is remarkable here: there were others who were the Lord's, besides Paul, in this ship; Luke, at least, whom, though the Lord left not without communion with himself in that dark hour, yet Paul only had the vision of the angel. You will accordingly observe, that every saint is not admitted to the same degree of communion with God, some enjoy more than others. All the disciples were not taken up to the mount of transfiguration, but only three of them. John was the beloved disciple, though Jesus loved them all, except the son of perdition. Some may be brought farther forward at one time, others at another time. Some may be full to the brim, when the enjoyments of others are very scanty. There is no reason to complain here; for,

(1.) Ordinarily God proportions his people's present lifting up to their former down-casting: Isa. xl. 4, "Every valley shall be exalted." Some need more communion with God in the way of conviction and humiliation, others in the way of comfort; but the heaviest heart, and the most humbled spirit, needs the greatest outletting of comfortable manifestations. And if God speak most comfortably to those who most need it, it is unjust to complain.

(2.) The greatest privilege is ordinarily followed with the greatest piece of work, 1 Kings xix. 7. God has hard pieces of service to

put into some people's hands beyond others. Paul must appear before Cæsar for the defence of the gospel, and therefore stood in most need of this manifestation to comfort and fortify him.

(3.) The backs of God's people are ordinarily strengthened in proportion to their burdens: and therefore the more liberal feast that a saint gets, he may expect the greater trial. If we compare the life of Isaac and Jacob, you will observe, that the latter had the greatest enjoyments of God; but so also had he the greatest trials of the two.

As a suitable improvement of what has now been observed, let us, who have had communion with God in any measure, however small, not overlook the mercy, but thankfully entertain it. There is real communion with God in these two things. (1.) In longing desires after Christ: Psalm xxvi. 9, "With my soul have I desired thee in the night, yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early." When the soul is touched with a desire of him above all persons and things, longing for the enjoyment of him as their portion, longing for his blood to sprinkle them, and his Spirit to sanctify them, it is an evidence of the Lord's discovering himself in some measure to that soul.—There is real communion with God, (2.) In real love to him, well-pleasedness with his covenant; Matth. xi. 6, "And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." There can be no true love to Christ, which is not produced by his love to the soul: 1 John iv. 19, "We love him, because he first loved us." And no heart will be truly satisfied with the covenant, with the tenor, benefits, and duties of it, but that which, by the influences of the Spirit, is framed in conformity to it: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power," Psalm cx. 3. If this has been your attainment, then cherish the spark. Quench not the Spirit. Satan will endeavour to rob you of it; but if it be tenderly watched and preserved, the Spirit will break out into a flame: Hos. vi. 3, "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord."—Let those who have had a more than ordinary meeting with God, and have been filled with consolation, admire God's mercy towards them, and prepare themselves for trials and temptations which will try their strength. God's children are suffered to eat no idle bread. Watch, therefore, and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. Carefully cherish and preserve what God has done for you, and improve it to your progress in sanctification. This is the true way to keep your candle shining.—Let us attend,

III. To the posture of the angel. He *stood*, he did not sit down, because he was not to stay. This was an extraordinary visit to Paul, he was not to look for this as his ordinary entertainment from heaven. Extraordinary manifestations are what we cannot expect to be continued, without interruption, while we are here. God will

have a difference betwixt heaven and earth. And as two summers are not to be looked for in one year, so a lasting heaven of comfort upon earth will not be found. Though the Lord may sometimes feed his people with strong sensible manifestations in this world, this is not their ordinary. They must for the most part live by faith, without extraordinary manifestations: 2 Cor. v. 7, "For we walk by faith, not by sight." Let Christians then lay their account with a struggling and wrestling life, with the clouds returning after the rain. For we are as those who travel by night, with the light of the moon, which sometimes shines clear, at other times hides her head under a cloud: Psalm xxx. 7, "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled."—We are,

IV. To consider the time of this manifestation: "This night." It was a sad night in that ship, all hopes of being saved were lost, and then the Lord appeared to help.—This may lead us to observe, that when things are brought to an extremity, this is a special opportunity which the Lord takes to appear for those that are his. This is the promise: Deut. xxxii. 36, "For the Lord will judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he sees that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left." And agreeable to this has been the experience of the saints in many cases. Thus, as to the church of God in Egypt, their bondage was most hard, before the Lord delivered them. The reasons why the Lord does this are many.—Among others,

1. By this the hand of God appears most eminent in the deliverance. The more desperate that the case be, the love of God in thinking upon his people, his wisdom in contriving their deliverance, his power in bringing it to pass, appear the more conspicuous: Isa. xxxiii. 10, "Now will I rise, saith the Lord; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself." He has the greater revenue of glory, by curing the disease when past all hope.—Another reason is,

2. That it brings the greater advantage to the saints: John xi. 15, "And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent you may believe." For hereby their eyes are opened to see their own weakness more, their patience is tried, their faith in God confirmed and strengthened, and their high thoughts of God and his perfections raised to a higher pitch.—As an improvement of this, I observe, that this affords ground of hope and comfort to the Lord's people, when matters are come to the lowest ebb with them, Zech. xiv. 7. Faith has ground to stand upon, when all things fail to sense. It is God's special time of beginning to work, when men can do no more. Thus Hagar at the well. Many a time the Lord makes the wheel of providence drive downward and downward, till we are almost at its extrimity; and then is the turning point.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

SERMON XLI.

Acts xxviii. 23,

For there stood by me this night the angel of the Lord, whose I am, and whom I serve.

Having explained and improved the first branch of the text, I now come to the

Second branch, namely, Paul's special relation to the God of heaven: "Whose I am, and whom I serve." And this is the chief thing I would insist upon. And here Paul declares two things. 1. To whom he belonged: "I am God's, I own no other Father, Lord, Master, or Proprietor." The centurion might say, "I am Cæsar's;" but Paul avows a more honourable Proprietor. 2. What was his business: "Whom I serve." He was on the service of that God to whom he belonged.

This word, "the Lord, whose I am," is very important. There were four things implied in it.

1. A comfortable view of God's special interest in him. He was convinced, that whoever others belonged to, he belonged to God, that there was a saving relation betwixt God and him.—There is,

2. A recognizing God's special interest in him. He had said it before at his first accepting of the covenant, "I am the Lord's;" and he did not repent the bargain, but repeated it over again, "I am his."—There is,

3. An open profession of his special relation to God. He was not ashamed of his proprietor, his Lord and Master; but he gloried in it, accounting himself happy in the relation.—There is,

4. A rejoicing in it, particularly with respect to this season of distress. As if he had said, The sea rages, the waves threaten us with death; but this is my happiness, I am the Lord's, in whose hands all these are.—From this subject I would take the following Doctrines:—

Doct. I. That it is the duty and interest of those who have truly given themselves away to the Lord, to look on themselves as his.

Doct. II. That those who are the Lord's ought to make, and will make, God's service their business.—We begin with

Doct. I. That it is the duty and interest of those who have truly given themselves away to the Lord, to look on themselves as his.

In treating this point, I shall,

I. Confirm this doctrine.

II. Shew in what respects those who have given themselves away to the Lord in his covenant are to look upon themselves as his.

III. Assign reasons why it is the duty of those who have truly given themselves away to the Lord in his covenant, thus to look on themselves as his.

IV Shew how it is their interest to look on themselves as the Lord's.

V. Conclude with some practical improvement.—We are, then,

I. To confirm the doctrine, That it is the duty and interest of those who have truly given themselves away to the Lord, to look on themselves as his. This is evident, if you consider,

1. The laudable practice of the saints, who had given themselves away to the Lord. They go over the bargain again, hold by it, and look upon themselves as the Lord's: Psalm cxvi. 16, "O Lord, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid, thou hast loosed my bonds." And Psalm cxix. 94, "I am thine, save me." The spouse, Song ii. 16, "My beloved is mine, and I am his."

2. The Spirit of God instructs them so to do. 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20, "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God? And ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." There is great weight in it, whose we look on ourselves to be. It is the sin of many, that they say, Psalm xii. 4, "Our lips are our own: who is Lord over us?" This proceeds from Satan, and the corrupt heart. The Spirit of the Lord teaches his own to look on themselves as his.

3. The Lord looks on such to be his, by a special relation: John xvii. 9, 10, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou has given me; for they are *thine*. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them." Yea, he takes a pleasure to assert his interest in them; he calls them, and pleads with them, to own the mutual relation betwixt him and them: Jer. iii. 4, "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?"

Lastly, The nature of the thing requires it, for they are his indeed. Honest covenanters with God, give themselves to the Lord: 2 Cor. viii. 5, "But first gave their ownselves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." They yield themselves to him, so that they are his, and therefore should look upon themselves as such.—Let us now,

II. Shew in what respects those who have given themselves away to the Lord in his covenant, are to look upon themselves as his.

1. They are to look upon themselves as his, in opposition to all his competitors. The Lord will not divide share in his covenant-people with any whatsoever: Isa. xxvi. 13, "O Lord our God, other lords besides thee, have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name." He will admit no rival with him, but if ye take me, let these go. The soul, till it comes within the covenant, is in a restless case, like a bee going from flower to flower, or a bird from bush to bush. The man has many masters and lords. But when come into the covenant, he breaks his league with them all, and is married to Christ, to live in undivided society with him: Psalm xlv. 10, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear: forget also thine own people, and thy father's house."

Believers, ye are not your own, and you must no more look on yourselves to be your own, 1 Cor. vi. 19, (quoted above). Have you given yourselves away to him? Then you are no more at your own disposal. Faith is the soul's coming out of itself to the Lord, that he may be all to us, and we as nothing. Away, then, with self-wisdom, it is but folly: self-righteousness, nothing other than rags; and self-strength is pitiful weakness.

You must no more look on yourselves as the children of your natural father the devil. You have been too long at his beck, his captives, slaves, and drudges. You must now change masters, you must renounce the prince of darkness, having enlisted with the Prince of peace. They are contrary masters, and ye cannot serve both, Matth. vi. 24. Answer all temptations to sin with this, that ye have come out from among them, and therefore have nothing to do with the work or entertainment of the house of hell.

Believers, you are to look on yourselves as no more belonging to the world lying in wickedness: John xv. 19, "Because ye are not of the world; but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Have you come away to Christ in the covenant? Then you have turned your back on the world, on its courses and ways, you must no more conform yourselves thereto, but to the heavenly Jerusalem: Rom. xii. 2, "And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." You have put your hand to the plough, do not adventure to look back. You have left the society of the wicked, do not mix with them again: Psalm xxii. 7, "Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever." Ye are no more for your lusts and idols, but for the Lord: Rom. vi. 16, "His servants ye are, to whom ye obey." Have

you given Christ the throne? Then your lusts must be mortified: "For they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts," Gal. v. 24. The offending right hand and eye must be parted with. These will return back to seek entertainment from you as formerly; but remember, you must be as obedient children, "not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in your ignorance," 1 Pet. i. 14.—Finally, consider yourselves as no more belonging to the law, or covenant of works, as a husband: Rom. vii. 4, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." They who have laid hold on Christ, in the covenant of grace, are divorced from the law. So that, though you are to perform all incumbent duties, you are not to perform them under the influence of the first covenant, as seeking and procuring life and salvation by them; but to express your thankfulness to him, whose you are, as being under Christ's law of love.

2. They are to look on themselves as his universally, without exception or reserve of any thing. Whatever you are, whatever you have, whatever you can do, or suffer, all is the Lord's; for in that day in which the soul closes honestly with Christ, all is made over to him together. To be more particular.—Look, then, on your bodies as his, to be temples for his Spirit, 1 Cor. vi. 19. with which to serve him. Even all the members of the body, are to be consecrated to the Lord, as instruments of righteousness unto God, Rom. vi. 13. You are to use your tongues in speaking for him, your hands in acting for him, your feet in going his errands. To abuse the body by intemperance, uncleanness, and the like, is to defile the temple of God. To exhaust the body in worldly labour, so as to unfit it for bearing its part in the service of God, is sacrilege, a devouring that which is holy; for your bodily strength is the Lord's.—Look upon your souls also as his. The soul is the best part of the man, and it is given away to God when one enters into his covenant. It is purchased by Christ, as a precious thing; and ye are to have a peculiar care of it, and must not presume to lay it at stake, as many do, for the satisfying of a lust, who often forget to loose the precious pledge by repentance.—All the faculties of your souls are his.—Your hearts are the Lord's: Prov. xxii. 26, "My son, give me thine heart." The world and our lusts have long divided our hearts betwixt them. They have been as a common inn, so throng with strangers, that the Master of the house had to lodge without. But, O remember! they are now the Lord's; that he must be the object of your choice, your love, your desire, and delight; and that all

your affections must centre in him whose your heart is.—Your will is also the Lord's: Acts ix. 6, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" You must learn to say, Thy will be done. Put away your self-will. The will of his commandments must determine your practice; the will of his providence, your lot. The long quarrel betwixt the Lord and you must now be at an end, namely, whether your will or his shall be done. His will must ever govern your will, and yours stoop to his.—Your conscience is his. It ought to be subject to him in all things, and to him only. Receive nothing in religion, in point of faith or practice, but upon the authority of God, speaking in his word; otherwise, you prostitute conscience to your lusts and the opinions of men: Matth. xxiii. 9, "And call no man your father upon earth: for one is your father which is in heaven." With whatever pretences these things be supported, such as antiquity, strictness, &c., they are to be rejected, Col. ii. 20, 21, 22. Receive every thing held out in the word, however opposite it may be to your carnal reasoning, interests, &c. Your every thought should be brought into captivity, to the obedience of Christ, 2 Cor. x. 5.—Again, you must consider also, your worldly comforts and enjoyments as his. If you have given yourselves to the Lord, you have laid them all down at his feet, to be disposed of at his pleasure: Luke xiv. 26, "If any man come unto me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." You will look on them now as the Lord's loan, which he may call back from you when he will. Look on them as what you are to improve for God. Your life, your liberty, honour, wealth, reputation, all is the Lord's, to be used for his honour, and willingly parted with at his call.—Your gifts and opportunities for serving God, are also his. The Lord has put them under your care, for the use of them, while the property remains in himself. You are but the stewards, and must use these talents for his honour; he has given you them with this charge, Luke xix. 13, "Occupy till I come." Have you a gift of knowledge? Do good by it, use all your gifts and comforts, for your salvation-work, and for the good of those with whom you are connected.—Finally, your time is his, Eph. v. 16, "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." Do not think you may fill up your time as you please in pursuit of vanities, or in following your lusts. No, you must make conscience of spending to good purpose every inch of your time; you must be careful that you trifle it not away, doing nothing, or worse than nothing.

3. They must look on themselves as his for evermore; not merely for a time, but for all times, all cases, and all conditions: Psalm

lxxii. 23, 26, "I am," says the Psalmist, "continually with thee.—My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Remember, that your ears are bored to the Lord's door-posts, you have lifted up your hand to the Lord, and cannot go back.—You must, then, be his, without interruption: Deut. v. 29, "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments *always*, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!" You must not be one day for God, another for the devil, nor take your religion by fits and starts, you must not suit your religion to times and companies.—You must be his, without apostacy and defection: Psalm cxix. 12, "I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end." You must make no term-day with Christ, but having loved your Master, you must resolve to abide with him for ever, to live with him, and to die with him, that thus you may be with him through the endless ages of eternity. And therefore your heart must rest in him, as an object which is completely satisfying: Psalm lxxiii. 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth, that I desire besides thee." Have you not come into the covenant, because, having traversed the whole creation, you could not find rest to your souls there, and therefore had taken Christ as a covering to the eyes, and a complete portion to the soul?—Resolve, then, that nothing shall part betwixt the Lord and you; that you will neither be boasted nor bribed away from him by the words, the smiles, the frowns, the reproaches, nor threatenings of the world: Song viii. 6, 7, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned." Whatever storms blow, you are the Lord's, you must not leave him, you must not be offended at his cross, but follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, through good report and bad report.—We now proceed,

III. To give some reasons, why it is the duty of those who have truly given themselves away to the Lord in his covenant, thus to look on themselves as his.—They are to do so,

1. Because they are his, in a manner the rest of the world are not. Our Lord has a peculiar title and interest in all who have honestly entered into covenant with him, John xvii. 9, 10, (quoted above;) and why should not this be avowed?—They are his, by a new creation: Isa. xliii. 21, "This people have I formed for my-

self; they shall shew forth my praise." There is not one soul, which has, in the way of believing, given itself to Christ, but it is made new by the power of regenerating grace. Hence every believer, who receives power to become a son of God, is said to be "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," John i. 12, 13. So that the Lord has the same right to the new creature, which he has to all by their first creation. Those who are new creatures, are absolutely his property; what in consequence they are made to be, it is all intended to be for his glory.—Again, they are his by redemption, applied to them. They are bought with a price. Jesus "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." They were captives to Satan, debtors to the law, and criminals to justice: he has given his life a ransom for them: and thus has bought them to himself. They could contribute nothing to a making up the price, he paid it all; and thus they are, on the best grounds, his wholly.—Finally, they are his by covenant: Heb. viii. 10, "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." He has offered this covenant to them, they have accepted it; in its nature, it is a marriage-covenant, they are his spouse. They have submitted to his royal sceptre, they are his subjects. They have dedicated themselves to the Lord; they have made a gift of themselves to the Lord. They have thus lifted up their hands to the Lord, and so cannot draw back, but must in duty consider themselves as his.—They are to do so; for,

2. The honour of God requires it. Those who are servants to persons of high rank, are usually subject to bear the badge of their master; and those who are the Lord's are in the same manner bound: Rev. xiv. 1, "And I looked, and lo! a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads." It is to the dishonour of our Lord, when we look on ourselves as our own, or are ashamed of acknowledging ourselves to be his: this cannot but reflect a dishonour on him; even as the avouching ourselves to be his tends to his honour before the world.—We should do so; for,

3. Our standing to the covenant requires it: Psalm cxix. 94, "I am thine, save me, for I have sought thy precepts." If we do not repent the bargain, but intend to hold by it, we must of necessity look on ourselves as his, having given away ourselves to him. If we refuse it, we do in effect retract our consent, recall the gift we

have made of ourselves to the Lord, and after vows, make inquiry. We give up with the covenant, and deny our indenting with Jesus Christ.—We now proceed,

IV. To shew how it is their interest to look on themselves as the Lord's—It is so, *First*, in respect of sanctification. *Second*, in respect of consolation.

First, In respect of sanctification. If you have given yourselves away to the Lord, you will henceforth look on yourselves as his only, his wholly, and his for ever; and this will be of excellent use to promote your sanctification, and so be a notable mean of real prosperity to your souls.—As,

1. It will be an antidote against backsliding. The consideration of your being the Lord's will make you say, with Jephthah, "I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back." You will have many temptations to go back to former lusts; both hell's smiles and frowns will be used for that purpose. And there is a backsliding disposition in the best: "My people," says God, Hos. xi. 7, "are bent to backsliding from me; though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt him." But O it is dangerous! "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him," Heb. x. 38. Remember Lot's wife; look on yourselves as the Lord's. This will be a mean to keep you with him, as the servant is kept with his master, whose ear was bored, and nailed to his master's door-post. This will let you see you may not, you must not go back.

2. It will afford an answer to every temptation. It will make you say with Joseph, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Gen. xxxix. 9. As long as you are in the world, you will not want temptations; and there is not a snare in the world but has some one friend or other to it in our hearts, some corruption which is nearly allied to it. And when they meet, it will be hard to keep the friends from close embraces, unless the soul will resolutely say, "I am the Lord's, I am not at my own disposal; whatever others may do, I cannot comply, for I have given myself away to the Lord, to fight under his banner, against the devil, the world, and the flesh. I am married to Christ, and therefore I cannot entertain other lovers."

3. It will be a spur to duty, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20, (quoted already.) If we be the Lord's servants, we must serve him; if we be married to Christ, we must exert ourselves to please our Husband; if planted in the house of God, we must bring forth fruit: Mal. i. 6, "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master." Our relation to the Lord will make us see that more is expected and looked for at

our hands, than from those who have not entered into his covenant: Matt. v. 48, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

4. It will blow the coal of your zeal for God, and make you of a public spirit, to devote all you are or have to the promoting of God's honour in the world: Phil. i. 21, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Were the impression that we are the Lord's more strong on our spirits, it would excite us effectually to take the part of God more vigorously against an ungodly generation, to stand up for his honour, his truths, and for the cause of holiness. The sense of the obligation of the covenants, by which these lands became the Lord's wearing off the spirits of the generation, (though the matter of them, being moral duty, and nationally sworn to, leaves an inviolable obligation on all succeeding generations), is one great spring of the lukewarmness, the profanity, and backslidings of all ranks of persons in church and state at this day. And if unto this be added, the weakening of the impressions of our sacramental engagements to be the Lord's, which too evidently appears to take place, we may well say, What will the generation turn to? Shall men take bonds on them to be the Lord's, and afterwards look on themselves in effect as loosened from them? To this is owing the uselessness of persons for God, their insignificancy in the world as to any service for God. Some have a tongue which can speak well enough for themselves, but they will not move it in the cause of holiness. Some have authority, credit, and wealth, something or other by which they might be useful for God in their families, in their neighbourhood, in their congregation, to suppress sin, to encourage piety, to advance Christ's kingdom, the credit of his word and ordinances; but none of these things are their business. If they had the deep impression of themselves, and all which is theirs, being the Lord's, they would see themselves obliged to employ for God whatever they are or have.

5. It will be a preparative for the hardest piece of service God may put into your hand. He puts into the hands of all, the cutting off of right-hand lusts, and plucking out of right-eye sins. If this impression wear off men's spirits, they will then stand and dispute the divine orders; they will debate with God, as if they had not already made the bargain; they will preserve these, as if in their covenant they had been expressly excepted. But, "I am the Lord's," would put an end to the dispute, and learn us to obey without quarreling, knowing we are in nothing masters of ourselves. Thus it did with Abraham, Gen. xxii.: Heb. xi. 17, "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac, and he that received

the promises offered up his only-begotten Son." You know not what hard piece of work for God may be put into your hand; but O think ye are the Lord's wholly, and therefore are to obey without reserve. You have put a blank into the Lord's hand, saying, with Paul, Acts ix. 6, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Whatever, then, he fills up must be welcome: and will be so, if you look on yourselves as no more your own, but as the Lord's.

6. It will reconcile you to your lot in private trials: Psalm xlvii. 4, "He shall choose our inheritance for us." It may be, God takes from you the comfort you expected in your relations, he takes away your health, your substance, in a greater or less degree, your credit and reputation, in regard they are laid under reproach. But the man who can solidly say, "I am the Lord's," sits down resigned under all these, reasoning thus with himself, "My comforts, my health, my wealth, and reputation, are all the Lord's, he may do with them as he will. I have put them all in his hands, to give or withhold as he sees good. I am the Lord's, let him do with me as to him seems good."

7. It will determine you to the right side in public or private trials. When the Lord says, "Who is on my side?" while many are drawn away to side with sin and Satan, this will determine you to take part with Christ, his people, and cause. When a generation is associating together against God, it is good for a person to think with himself that he is already disposed of to the Lord, while those who are not looking on themselves as the Lord's, are ready to fall in with the multitude going the wrong way.

Lastly, It will help you to suffer for Christ. This was what bore up Paul's heart, when he was a prisoner in that ship which was ready to be swallowed up in the waves. If you be the Lord's, your substance, your liberty, your life, are all the Lord's, and at his disposal. And the consideration of God's interest in them will help you to lay them down at his feet.—We shall now consider,

Secondly, This in respect of consolation. Your looking on yourselves as the Lord's will be of notable use for your consolation. He who can, on solid ground, say, "I am the Lord's," has thus a storehouse of comfort, more than if all the world was his. He who can say this, can express a great deal more than he who can say, A kingdom, a crown, an empire, are mine. Three marks of persons who can avow thus much shall be offered.

1. He who can say, "My heart is the Lord's; he has the chief room in my affections above all persons and all things," may say, "I am the Lord's:" Psalm lxxiii. 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee."

1 Pet. ii. 7, "Unto you therefore which believe he is precious." Hast thou seen a glory in him, which has so darkened all created excellency, that he reigns in thy affections? Thy heart is his captive, so that he is dearer to thee than what is dearest in the world. Say then, I am his, for he has thine heart.

2. He who can say, "My life is his," so that thou makest it thy habitual endeavours to live to him, not to thyself, not to thy lusts, Phil. i. 21, "For to me to live is Christ;" is it the great design thou hast in the world, to please him, to walk before him, unto all well pleasing in heart, lip, and life? and what is displeasing to him, is displeasing and a burden to thee, whether it be in thyself or others: say, "I am his," for thy life is his.

3. He who can say, "My all is his," art thou content rather to part with the whole of what is dear to thee, than to part with him and his way? and art thou resolved honestly to lay thy all down at his feet, to be disposed of in what way he orders? Say, then, "I am his," for thy all is his, Luke xiv. 26.

Thus, you see who they are who may say, as Paul did, "God, whose I am." And he who can say this, he may, in consequence of it, speak these six comfortable words:—

1. He may say, "God is mine:" Song ii. 16, "My beloved is mine, and I am his;" for the covenant-relation is mutual: "The Father is my Father, the Son is my Saviour, the Holy Ghost is my Sanctifier." Nay, thou mayest run over all the attributes of God, and call them thine; thou mayest say, "His power is mine to defend me, his wisdom to guide me, his mercy, grace, and love, all are mine, Even as a wife, in her right to her husband, may call every thing which is his, her own.—He may say,

2. "All the promises and benefits of the covenant are mine:" 2 Pet. i. 14, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the pollution that is in the world through lust." In that day in which the soul gives itself to Christ, Christ gives himself to that soul; and with him they have all the promises and benefits of the covenant, as of the marriage-contract; so that the soul may say, "Peace with God is mine; pardon, and every blessing, are mine." They may read Christ's Testament, and of all the precious promises in it, may say, "They are mine:" 2 Cor. i. 20, "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us."—They may say,

3. "I shall get safe through the world to the other side:" John xvii. 12, "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name; those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is

lost but the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled." Satan and the world may get back their own, though they have been pretending to leave them: but they never can get back so much as one of those who are truly the Lord's. The bond of the covenant, savingly entered into, is a sure bond, it will keep them who cannot keep it.—They may say,

4. "I shall be cared and provided for in all cases and conditions." Surely God will care for his own, come of others what will. He will provide for those of his own house. He who feeds his birds, will not starve his babes. "Though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waves thereof roar, and be troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof: there is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High," Psalm xlvi.—They may say,

5. "All I meet with in the world shall turn to my good:" Rom. viii. 28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Art thou his? Then every thing shall be for thy advantage in the end. The stones of affliction thrown at thee shall be as precious stones, and all the paths of God shall drop down fatness. —They may say,

Lastly, "All is mine:" 1 Cor. iii. 21—23, "For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." For, having a right to Christ, they have a right to all things with and through him.

IV. I am now to make some improvement.—From what has been observed, we may may learn,

1. How foolish those are who cannot be persuaded to give themselves away to the Lord in his covenant. They neglect their great duty, they are blind to their great interest. Think on this, you who will be your own, and say, "Who is Lord over us?" You will have your own will to be your law, and will not be the Lord's. It is but a poor affair, even though thou could say, "All the world is mine," for God will say of you, "I never knew you." He will disown you at death, at judgment, and through eternity.—Learn,

2. That it is the duty of those who lay hold on the covenant, to receive also the seals of it: for thus we publicly acknowledge ourselves to be the Lord's. It is strange how those who plead their accepting of the covenant should live in the neglect of improving its seals. Among men, they who are in earnest for a bargain or contract, certainly will not refuse to ratify it. How is it, then, that

persons are for the covenant of grace, and yet will not ratify it, by receiving the seals of that covenant?—Learn,

3. That such as have given themselves honestly away to the Lord, should look on themselves as his. Impress it on your spirits, ye are not your own, but the Lord's. Have you given your consent to Christ in the covenant? Then henceforth reckon yourselves to be his.—Look on yourselves,

(1.) As his habitation: Eph. ii. 22, "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Christ has called to you to open to him, promising to dwell in you. You have given consent to him, now look on yourselves as his habitation, and exert yourselves to drive out the old inhabitants. Consider yourselves as no more at liberty to harbour his enemies. Our Lord has made a purchase of two houses, and has made two journeys, to take infeftment and possession of them; (1.) Having purchased heaven for his people, he went thither in his ascension, to take possession of it for them: Heb. vi. 20, "Whither the forerunner hath for us entered, even Jesus, made an High-priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." (2.) Having purchased the sinner for himself by his blood, he comes to the sinner's heart, to take possession of it for himself: Rev. iii. 20, "Behold," says he, "I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." To the former house he has ready access, having to do with a holy and just God: but not so to the latter; often his enemies are admitted in, and he is made to stand at the door, as if the house were not his own, because here he has to do with fickle creatures: Song v. 2, "I sleep, but my heart waketh; it is the voice of my Beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night."—Look on yourselves,

(2.) As his temple, 1 Cor. vi. 19, (quoted above); a temple consecrated and set apart for the Lord, which, therefore, it is most dangerous to defile. Before the soul comes into the covenant, the man is Satan's work-house: Eph. ii. 2, "He is the Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." His heart is a forge of evil imaginations, a den of thieves. But entering into the covenant, he is consecrated for a holy temple unto the Lord. Be careful, then, that your hearts and lives be a continual sacrifice of praise, Christ the altar, and thou the priest. Feast on the sacrifice slain for you, feed daily on Jesus Christ, and guard against pollutions of heart and life.—Look on yourselves,

(3.) As his confederates, or covenant-people: Heb. viii. 10, "I

will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." Remember, the covenant ye have entered into is an offensive and defensive league. You are to have common friends and common enemies with the Lord. Whoso are the friends of God, they must be your friends also, as Ruth said to Naomi, "Thy people shall be my people." Psalm cxix. 63, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts." If you desire heaven, you must associate with those who are going thither, for a companion of fools shall be destroyed."—His enemies must also be yours: Psalm cxxxix. 21, 22, "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred, I count them mine enemies." See also Psalm lxix. 9, "For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up, and the reproaches of them that reproached thee have fallen upon me."—Look on yourselves,

(4.) As his followers: Eph. v. 1, "Be ye, therefore, followers of God as dear children." Our Lord is given for a Leader, Isa. lv. 4, to lead his people through the world to heaven. Now, you are going through the wilderness, where it is hard, in many cases, to discern the right way, and where there are many to lead us wrong. The multitude goes the way to destruction, but do you keep your eye on your guide: Prov. iii. 6, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Observe his precepts, his example; mark his footsteps, and follow them: 1 John ii. 6, "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk even as he walked." Follow also the footsteps of his flock, and conform not to the world, to follow them: Rom. xii. 2, "And be not conformed to this world; but be transformed, by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect will of God."—Look on yourselves,

(5.) As his subjects, for he is your King and Lord, yea, your God and King, to whom you owe absolute resignation and obedience: Psalm xlv. 11, "He is thy Lord, and worship thou him." Christ has a kingdom in the world, and whoso have entered into his covenant are the subjects of that kingdom. Observe, therefore, to live according to his laws, confederate not with his enemies, but be true to your King and Lord.—Look on yourselves,

(6.) As children of his family: 1 Pet. i. 14, "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in your ignorance; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy." Have you come out from among those of Satan's family, and entered into the family of God? then walk as the children of God. Do not again mix with Satan's family: Psalm xii. 7, "Thou shalt keep

them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever." Avoid them, their company, and their ways, as you would shun a society infected with the plague: Acts ii. 40, "And with many other words did he testify, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation." Strive to be like your heavenly Father; study to be obedient and dutiful children to him.—Look on yourselves,

Lastly, As his servants. So says the text. Our Lord has been amongst us, seeking servants to himself. Remember he is your Master, and you must apply yourselves to his work.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

SERMON XLII.

Acts xxviii. 23,

For there stood by me this night the angel of the Lord, whose I am, and whom I serve.

Having considered and improved the first doctrine taken from these words, I now go on to

Doct. II. That those who are the Lord's ought to make, and will make, God's service their business.—For illustrating this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. What is that service of God which is the business of those who are the Lord's.

II. I am to shew, what it is to make God's service our business, or when one may be said to do so.

III. I will confirm the doctrine. And then,

IV. We shall add the practical improvement of the subject.—We are then,

I. To shew what is that service of God which is the business of those who are the Lord's.

This is to be considered in respect, *First*, Of the matter; *Secondly*, Of the manner of this service.

First, We are to consider the service of God, as to the matter of it. This is as wide and broad, as is the broad law of God; therefore serving God, and keeping his commandments, are joined together. The servant's work is to do the Master's will: Luke xii. 47, "And that servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with

many stripes." I shall offer you some directions anent this service, that you may see what it is in respect of the matter of it.

1. There is salvation-work, and generation-work, which God puts in your hands, as the matter of your service.—There is salvation-work: Phil. ii. 12, "Work out your own salvation, with fear and trembling." You must begin this work, carry it on, and work it out. Sinner, thou art in hazard of perishing, God calls thee to see thyself, that thou perish not, and accounts it service to him that thou art concerned, and layest out thyself for thy own salvation. It is most necessary work, for the sinner's case is in this respect like theirs, whom some punish, and oblige to work, by putting them into a house where the water comes in on them, where they must either work at the pump, or be drowned.—There is generation-work: Acts xiii. 36, "For David, after he had served his own generation, by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption." There is something which God has put into every one of our hands, to do for him and his honour in the world; the duty of our stations and relations, and the duty arising from some special occasions we have of honouring God. It is our business to discern all this, to exert ourselves, and get it done before our time be done: Gal. vi. 10, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." If we do not, we are unprofitable servants, cumberers of the ground, and useless for God in the world.

2. There is an external and internal service to God.—External service, a service with the outward man: 1 Cor. vi. 20, "For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit which are God's." The whole man is God's, and therefore though internal service be preferable to external, yet God must have the one as well as the other. Here are to be taken in all external duties, of piety towards God, of righteousness and mercy towards our neighbour. These are a great part of our business in this world, if we be the Lord's servants. Our ears must be employed to hear his word, our eyes to read it, our tongues to speak to him in prayer and praise; to speak of him and for him to men; our hands and all our members to act for him in the world. There is—Internal service, we are to glorify him with our spirit, which is his: John iv. 24, "God is a spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." This is the soul of religion, and the chief part in the service of God, without which the other is but a lifeless, unacceptable carcase; and therefore the character of a true servant is taken from it: Phil. iii. 3, "We are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ

Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Art thou the Lord's? Then it must be your business to love him, to fear him, to believe and depend upon him, to obey and resign yourselves unto him. In a word, it is to keep the heart, and employ it in his service; it is to meditate on, rejoice and delight in him; suiting your will to his in all things, and consecrating the whole of your affections to him.

3. There is stated service and continual service.—Stated services are to be performed to God, at such and such times. Thus you are to serve him in secret in your closets, in private in your families, worshipping him morning and evening, Matth. vi. 6; Jer. x. 25. If you be the Lord's, it is the least you can do, to pay thy homage to him by thyself in the morning, when he gives thee a new day; and at evening, when thou are to enter into the darkness of the night. And if yourselves be the Lord's, you will also devote your houses to him, and pay him your homage in a family capacity: Josh. xxiv. 15, "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Look on the morning sacrifice in your family as the Lord's due, as well as the evening one. Job had as great a family, as large a stock, and as much work in hand, as any can pretend to, yet he duly observed the morning sacrifice. Thus did Job continually, chap. i. 5. And then there is the Lord's weekly service in his own day, in the public duties and ordinances thereof. A piece of service this which those who are the Lord's will find themselves obliged to make conscience of, and not loiter away the day unnecessarily at home: "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth," Psalm xxvi. 8. It was the godly Shunamite's practice, though she had a good way to go, 2 King iv. 23. It was David's also, so that Saul knew, when he was absent, there was certainly some extraordinary thing kept him away, 1 Sam. xx. 26. —There is continual service: Acts xxvi. 71, "Unto which promise, our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come." A Christian must never be out of his Master's work, he serves God in the interval of duties, as well as in duties. Hence we are ordered to pray always, and not to faint; not that we are always to be on our knees, but are always to be in a praying frame. The Lord's servants will find no time in which to be idle, as long as the broad law is continually laying work to his hands, he desires to "walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless," Luke i. 6. Whatsoever we do, we are to have an eye to God in it, and so to manage our worldly employments, as to tincture them all with religion: Col. iii. 17, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." This is the walking with God recommended to us by the example of Enoch, Gen. v. 24.

4. There is doing-service and suffering-service.—There is doing-service. The Lord calls his people to act for him. As he said to Saul, Acts ix. 6, he says to every one, "It shall be told thee what thou must do." He requires doing and working from all who call him Lord: Luke vi. 46, "And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" They have much to do that are the Lord's. They have their hearts and lives to purify. And do what they will, they have always more to do as long as they are here: "Brethren," says Paul, Phil. iii. 13, 14, "I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." They have a great deal, which hath been wrong done, to undo by repentance. And in all, they have much opposition, little strength, and the Master urgeth haste; so they have business enough.—There is suffering-service: Phil. ii. 17, "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all." The Lord calls his people to serve him in bearing of their burdens, taking up their cross and following him. And we will never want business of that nature, every day will have the evil thereof: Luke ix. 23, "And Jesus said unto them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." The Mediator himself, who was the Father's servant, his great service was suffering service; and those who are his must not think to miss it. As he suffered satisfying justice, they must suffer for their trial, and the exercise of their graces. Thus, when we are under the cross, we are on service, and serve the Lord in a Christian bearing of our trials.

Lastly, There is ordinary and extraordinary service, of all the kinds before named.—There is ordinary service. There are pieces of work, which are the ordinary or every day's task of those who are the Lord's, as the bearing of ordinary trials, Luke ix. 23, (above quoted), and doing of the ordinary duties of religion. It is ordinary service to fight the good fight of faith, every day grappling with temptations from the devil, the world, and the flesh. To be running the Christian race, making progress in sanctification, mortifying lusts, and the like.—There is extraordinary service, which God only sometimes calls his people to in holy providence. Thus he called Abraham, Gen. xxii. to offer up his son. There are few servants but they are obliged sometimes to do something beyond ordinary, which will try their strength in a peculiar manner. Thus it is with God's servants; sometimes they meet with extraordinary temptations, or sufferings, and are called to extraordinary duties, to do

for themselves, or to do for God. And truly there is the extraordinary duty of secret fasting and prayer, without which it is hard to live right: Zech. xii. 12, "And the land shall mourn, every family apart."—We shall now,

II. Consider the service of God, as to the manner of it. And unless it be performed in the right manner, God will not account it service to him, though ever so costly. If what we do, we would have the Lord to account it as service to him, we must perform it.

1. In obedience to, and under the sense of the commandment of God: Col. iii. 17, (quoted above). What a person is prompted to, without any respect to the commandment of God, cannot be accounted as service to him, since it has no respect to his authority in the commandment: Psalm cxix. 6, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have a respect unto all thy commandments." We should learn to do good; and what we do, we should do it because God commands it to be done, if we would shew ourselves his servants. We should pray, because God commands it. We should eat, because he has said, Thou shalt not kill. We should work, because he hath said, Thou shalt not steal. Now, doing what we do in this way, it will be all counted God's service. In serving God, we are,

2. To aim at his honour and glory in it: 1 Cor. x. 31, "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." We should make God, and not ourselves the chief end of all our performances, if we would have them accounted service to God; for God will never be the rewarder of that work which has not himself for the end of it: "Ye did not at all," said God unto his ancient people, "fast unto me, even unto me; and when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did ye not eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?" Zech. vii. 5, 6. If we seek ourselves, our own profit and peace, as our chief end in what we do, God will reject our services. For a servant, if he should work ever so diligently, if it be to himself, not to his master, it cannot be acceptable service; so also in this case.—In serving God, we are to do it,

3. Out of love to him: Heb. vi. 10, "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work, and labour of love, which ye have shewed towards his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." This love is to be the predominant motive of our service, and should be stronger than the fear of punishment, and hope of reward. God sees the heart, and no service but that which comes from the heart will be accepted of him: Col. iii. 23, "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men." He cares not for the service of slaves, who do not serve him, but through fear of his wrath; nor can he away with the hireling-service of those

who serve him only that they may make their own advantage by it. The heart must be in it and at it, or it is no service in his esteem.—We are to serve God,

Lastly, In faith: Rom. xiv. 23, "For whatever is not of faith, is sin." Faith is an ingredient absolutely necessary in all service to God: Heb. xi. 6, "Without faith, it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." And there is a threefold faith required here. (1.) The faith of God's command, requiring the duty, Rom. xiv. 23; for if persons do not believe that God requires such a duty of them, it is not service to him. (2.) The faith of the promise of strength for the duty, by which the soul is carried out of itself to the Lord, for strength to perform it. We are commanded to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, 2 Tim. ii. 1. Thus God's service is called walking in the name of the Lord: Zech. x. 12, "And I will strengthen them in the Lord; and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the Lord." (3.) The faith of acceptance through Christ, by which the soul is carried over the work itself to Christ, to look for its acceptance only for his sake.—I am now to shew,

II. What it is to make God's service our business, or when a person may be said to be thus employed. This will describe to you the person who may with confidence avow this claim, "God, whose I am, and whom I serve." In regard to such a person, I observe,

1. That God's service is his grand design in the world; he may have many works on the wheel; but this is the chief one: Psalm xxvii. 4, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." Whatever employment or trade a person betakes himself to, though he may at times put his hand to many other things; yet the work of his calling is still his chief business. Thus he who betakes himself to the service of God, will make this his chief business. There are many things to be done; but there is one thing more needful beyond all other things, and this is the person's great object in the world. Like Mary, he attends to this, and makes choice of that good part which shall not be taken from him, Luke x. 42.—Here, however, there may be proposed this

QUESTION, How may a person know whether he makes God's service his grand design in the world or not? As to this, I answer,

(1.) What is it that thou seekest to obtain with the greatest eagerness and concern? Psalm iv. 6, 7. This is thy grand design, be what it will; for what the heart is most set upon, this the per-

son will be most concerned about. Now, is it the service of God, in its various parts as above described, that your heart is set upon? then it is well, Psalm xxvii. 4, (quoted above). That person whose heart runs like a hare in pursuit of the things of the world, but moves like a snail in the things of the world to come, is not so. He swims like a feather in eternal concerns, never diving into them; but he sinks like lead in worldly ones, for these engross the whole of his attention.

(2.) What is that the miscarrying in which lies nearest the heart? The person whose business is God's service, the miscarrying in soul matters will lie most heavy upon him; but the miscarrying of other matters will be heaviest on others. What the heart makes its chief business in a greater or less measure, will be most grievous. Thus Job, when he lost all, chap. i. was distressed; afterwards, when the Lord withdrew from him, he was infinitely more affected.

(3.) When God's service and other things come in competition which of those must yield in thy practice? Luke xiv. 26, "If any come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." A person who has got a sore leg, will dispose of his body as may best suit it; but a person who has a tree leg, will cut and carve with it, as may best suit his body. If a person has the unmortified love of the world in him, so that it is to him like a living limb, all things else must yield to it: he will dispose of his religion, as may best suit his worldly interest, and will sacrifice his spiritual concerns to his temporal; and if God's service interfere with his worldly interest, he will justle it by. But it is just the contrary with those who make God's service their business; in their practice, every thing else must yield to it.—I observe,

2. That the person who makes God's service his business, serves him with the whole man: 1 Cor. vi. 20, "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." He not only lends his hand to the work, as a person would do who passes by accidentally; but sets his heart to it, as a person whose business it is. He looks on himself as wholly the Lord's, and therefore devotes himself wholly to him, in soul and in body, to be at his call.—It is the business of his mind to know the Lord, and what belongs to his eternal peace, Song i. 7. This is the grand inquiry with which he is taken up, What is the way I must take for another world? What is the duty God calls me to? What must I do to be saved?—It is the business of his will, to conform to the will of God in all things: Psalm cxix. 112, "I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes, always even unto the

end." In that day in which the soul gives itself to the Lord, the person's will is surrendered a captive to the obedience of faith; and the great business afterwards is, to have it to follow the will of God, as the shadow does the body.—It is the business of his affections, which do all centre in him: Matth. vi. 21, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." The love of God is the comprehensive duty of the whole law: and where love is fixed on God, there all the other affections will draw after him. The soul will hate evil, will sorrow for what dishonours God, will rejoice in what is pleasing to him, and cheerfully obey what he commands.—Finally, even the body itself is for the Lord and his service: 1 Cor. vi. 13, "Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body." They who have truly given themselves to the Lord, will look on their bodies as for his service in life, to act for him, yea, and even in death to suffer for him, if he call for it. "So now also," says Paul, "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death," Phil. i. 20.—I observe,

3. The person who makes God's service his business, serves him in all things; that is, whatever be his business to which he is called to, he strives to act in it as serving the Lord. This is important in that phrase: Psalm cxvi. 18, "I have set the Lord always before me." And we are called to it by these scriptures: Prov. iii. 6, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Col. iii. 17, "And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father, by him." A person who makes religion his business, will season all his business with it, and thus cast it into a religious mould. He will carry his religion not only to his religious duties, but diffuse a strain of it even through his natural and civil business; and thus carry it with him to the field where he works, and to the market where he trades.—Here, again, may occur another

QUESTION, How may a person serve the Lord in managing, and being employed about his worldly affairs? ANSWER, (1.) Act from a sense of the command: 1 Cor. vii. 24, "Brethren, let every man wherein he is called therein abide with God." (2.) Depend on him for direction: Prov. iii. 6, (quoted above). (3.) Depend on him for success: Psalm cxxvii. 1, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. (4.) Acquiesce in his disposing of you as may best suit your spiritual interest. (5.) Deal with men as if you were under God's eye. (6.) Be moderate in your pursuits, 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30. *Lastly*, Be suitably affected with the dispensations of providence, as they fall out to you.—I observe,

4. That the person who makes God's service his business, scruples at no piece of service which God puts in his hand, but makes conscience of universal obedience: Psalm cxii. 6, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments." God's servants are not allowed to be choosers; and a true servant of God will not choose his work, but applies himself to whatever God carves out for him, even to fulfil all his will, Acts xiii. 22. Be it doing or suffering work, his Master's will being made known, he prepares himself to do it. The servant of God will not scruple at an internal service, but apply himself to it, as well as external: Phil. iii. 3, "We are the circumcision, that worship God in spirit, that rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Many will go about bodily exercise in religion, who are mere strangers to heart-work, and be serving God in their spirits. But this will never be acceptable, for these will always be accounted our masters who have our heart-service.—Such will not stop at painful and hard service. It is the mark of a slothful servant, to comply only with the easy pieces of religion: Prov. xx. 4, "The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold." God commands thee to pluck out the right eye lust; if religion be thy business, serve him in it. It was painful for Abraham to put the knife to the throat of Isaac; but it was his business to serve the Lord, therefore, when called, he was ready to obey.—Such will not stop at dangerous service, for whoso will come after Christ, must take up his cross, and will be contented to follow the Lord, whithersoever he goeth, Rev. xiv. 4. The Lord has so ordered it, that the way to heaven has many difficult steps in it, so that the fearful cannot walk therein, Rev. xxi. 8. But those who come there have courage for dangers in the way, and will follow him through the sea of this world, in a storm as well as in a calm.—Finally, such will not stop at costly service. The Lord calls his people sometimes in a special manner to this duty: Prov. iii. 9, "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase;" And forasmuch as their all is the Lord's, it will be at his service. Sometimes they are called to suffer in these things, and to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, Heb. x. 34. Sometimes to act for God therewith, as David did, when he bought the threshing-floor of Araunah, to build an altar unto the Lord upon it, 2 Sam. xxiv. 21, 24.—I observe,

5. That the person who makes God's service his business, is constant and persevering in the service of God: Psalm cxix. 112, "I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes, always even unto the end." A true servant of God is for his service at all times, in prosperity and in adversity. They who make God's service their

business, will continue with it unto the end: and this is the character of a servant: John viii. 31, "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." It is to such only that the reward of grace is promised: Rev. ii. 10, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." They are constant in two respects.—They are so,

(1.) In that they do not give over his work, laying it down and taking it up when they please. They do not serve him by fits and starts, but labour to go on evenly in their way, Psalm cxvi. 8, (quoted above). The religion of many is like an ague, in which the patient has his hot and cold fits. Thus they go to and fro, one day for God, another for the devil. Whatever good mood they may be in at a time, they do not abide in it. Their goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away. The whole of what they have from heaven is as flashes, Psalm lxxviii. 34. The spirit of holiness rests not on them; the whole of what heaven has from them, is an over-leap into the holy ground, Job xxvii. 9, 10. But though there are great changes in the frame of the saint, yet the habitual bent of his heart is still towards God. They are constant in this; for,

(2.) They never change masters again: Heb. x. 39, "But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." They never apostatise totally, nor finally. Those who do so will never see heaven: Luke ix. 62, "And Jesus said unto him, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Lot's wife was an emblem of apostates; God turned her into a pillar of salt, for a terror to all apostates. Those who are the Lord's will not be flattered away from him by the allurements of the world and the flesh, which is one engine by which Satan makes many cast off God as a master, as did Judas and Demas. And there are many who have been blooming professors, who have by these means been led aside, till they cast off religion altogether. Nor will the true servants of the Lord be deterred from him by the severities which they may meet with in the service of the Lord, Song viii. 7, "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." We read of some who, when they heard Christ's doctrine, said, This is a hard saying; who can hear it? John vi. 60. Ver. 66, "From that time, many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." But where men have truly given themselves away to the Lord, and make religion their business, their religion will last to the end,

whatever methods be used to extinguish it in any manner of way. We now come to the

III. General head, namely, To confirm the doctrine. Consider, there are two things here to be distinguished, namely, slight touches at the service of God, which the devil's servants may sometimes afford, who are far from God; and the making religion and the service of God our business and ordinary employment, which none will do but those who are truly and savingly the Lord's. When Paul gave this account of himself, "Whose I am, and whom I serve," did he mean that now and then he was employed in the service of the Lord, and that it was only his by-hand work? No, surely he aims at no less than that it was the great business of his life, and that he was as truly fixed to the service of God as his chief business, as ever servant was to his master's work. Now, that God's service is the business of those who are the Lord's, is what I am to confirm. And therefore consider,

1. That the master's service is the business of a servant as a servant, so that no person can be accounted a servant of a person who does not make his service their business: Rev. xxii. 3, "And his servants shall serve him." An hireling who works one day to one, another to another, and another to himself, is not accounted a servant of his to whom he works. But the chief business of a servant is his master's business, as long as he is in his service. Now, they who are truly the Lord's are really and properly his servants: not only of right, but actually so, sealed in their foreheads, Rev. vii. 3, abiding by his service as their proper business in the world; and those who turn aside from it were never properly his servants: 1 John ii. 19, "They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest, that they were not of us."—Consider,

2. That they who are his, are his servants in a most strict sense, as being wholly and absolutely his, and in no sense their own, or at their own disposal: "Whose I am, and whom I serve." They are not hired servants, who may go away at a term; but bought servants (by redemption), born servants (by regeneration.) Such Solomon had: Eccl. ii. 7, "I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house." These are they we call servants, who are wholly in their master's power. And this relation to God, David, though a king, powerfully pleads: Psalm cxvi. 16, "O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds." But even these, among men, may be ransomed and made free. So the Hebrew servants

were to be free in the seventh year, Exod. xxi. 2. Or if he would not be free, then, ver. 6, he was to serve for ever, that is, to the Jubilee, Lev. xxv. 40. But there is no term of service here, no ransoming. Since they are then his servants in this sense, how can it be otherwise, but that his service must be their business.—Consider,

3. That they cannot continue his servants, and yet have another master: Matth. vi. 24, "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." They have chosen God for their master, they have renounced and given up with their old master the devil, they are kept by the power of God, that they can never again revive their old relation; and it is impossible that they can serve two contrary masters at once; but having renounced the Devil, they cleave unto the Lord. And therefore, since every one makes either the service of their lusts, or the service of God, their business; and as they do not make the former their service, the latter must of necessity be it.—Consider,

4. That if it were so, then the Lord would fall short of the grand design of their redemption, of making them his own, which cannot be. He has redeemed them by price, yea, and also by power; and the end of both is, that they may serve God as his servants: Tit. ii. 14, "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Luke i. 74, "That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness, before him all the days of our life." When the Lord sent Moses to bring the children of Israel from the service of the Egyptians, it was not that they might live idly, and serve no more, but that they might change their master, and their work: Exod. iv. 23, "And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me." Thus it is also in the spiritual delivery.—Consider,

Lastly, That this making of God's service our business, is a distinguishing character of a person truly the Lord's. Of worldly men it is said, Phil. iii. 19, "Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." But of the saints it is said, ver. 20, "For our conversation is in heaven: from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." What is a person's business, distinguishes him from many others; and religion, being our business, distinguishes us from the unconverted crowd, who are accounted workers of iniquity though they be persons not estranged from religious exercises; because, though they do these duties, it is another thing that is their

great business in the world, Matth. vii. 21—23.—I come now,

IV. To make some improvement; and this,

1. In a use of information. Hence we may learn,

(1.) That whoever are the Lord's, must apply themselves to the Lord's work and service: Luke vi. 46, "And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" You were all baptised into his name and service, and some, of late, have been dedicating themselves to him in the sacrament of the supper. Think not that you are now at liberty, or that your work is over. No; you are to begin your work, and perform your vows, and make out your service; attend to it, then, with heart and hand, for he is a master who seeks and will have the heart.—We may learn,

(2.) That the hearts of God's honest servants, are reconciled to his work and service. It is not a force put on them; but their choice, as that which they like the best. They are ready to resolve with Joshua, that they and their houses will serve the Lord, chap. xxiv. 15. It is not only their duty, that they must do it; but their privilege and interest, that they have to do it. They will value themselves more on being God's servants, than they would on being governors of a kingdom.—We may learn,

(3.) That those who make not religion their business, are none of the Lord's. They may be his by an external covenant-relation, but they are not members of his family, by a saving relation. Many take on with the Lord as a master, but they slight the bargain, and never enter home, but continue with their old master, which appears is not making God's service their business, Psalm lxxviii. 36, 37. God will pursue all such at so dreadful a rate, that it had been better for them that they had never come under engagements to be his: 2 Pet. ii. 21, "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." This writes death upon many as none of his.—Such as,

(1.) Those whose great business in the world is to serve themselves. When self-love is the predominant principle, self-seeking will be the great business: 2 Tim. iii. 2, "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous," &c. Phil. ii. 21, "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." How unlike the service of God are they, who will drive over the honour of God, the good of their neighbour, and the duty they owe to him, to serve themselves. These are narrow souls, not enlarged by God's grace, who make themselves their chief end, and lay not out themselves for the honour of God, and the good of their neighbours, as they have opportunity.

(2.) Those who are servants of men, instead of serving God: 1 Cor. vii. 23, "Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men:" they subject themselves to men's lusts, subjecting their faith to other men's notions, and suiting their practice to other men's lusts. Thus they make idols of them, putting them in God's room: Matth. xxiii. 9, "Call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven." Thus persons are time-servers, turning with the wind, according as the times turn, who think it their wisdom not to follow truth too hard at the heels, lest it dash out their brains. And such are company-servers, who will change themselves into any complexion in which the company is.

(3.) Those who are servants of sin: Rom. vi. 20, "For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness." The saints indeed often sin; but they are not the servants of sin. Whoso are such are none of Christ's, but they serve the devil and their lusts. They sin against the gospel-remedy, going on in a state of unbelief and impenitency. They are not only infected with the plague of sin, but they slight the Physician with his remedies, namely, his blood and Spirit; they will not have this man to reign over them. Luke xix. 14, "Sin regins in them like a king; they readily obey it in the lusts thereof," Rom. vi. 16, and fairly yield themselves to it. They are in the snare of the devil, and are taken captive by him at his will. Do not think you can be servants to God, who are thus situated. No man can serve two masters.

Lastly, Those who make the Lord's service but their by-hand work, not their chief employ. These are religion's chance-customers, who will never enrich themselves with it. And such are these who never make religion their predominant concern. The chief stream of their care and anxiety runs in another channel than the grand inquiry, What shall I do to be saved? The things of time lie nearest their heart, not the matters of eternity.—Those who follow religion no farther than their other ends will allow of, who make it yield to their temporal interests, and embrace it only when those do not interfere with it, like the allowance Pharaoh made for religion, by calling idleness the spring of it, Exod. v. 17.—Those who confine their religion to their religious duties, and do not weave it into the whole of their conversation. Suppose one to be very exact in a due performance of secret and family duties; yet if he do not walk with God in the interval of duties, and carry his religion through his worldly business, God's service is not his business.—I would now improve this subject,

2. In an use of trial.

You may and should try yourselves, whether you be the Lord's or not. If you can say, "It is God whom I serve," ye may say, "It is God's whose I am." If religion be your business, you are God's servants, and he will own you to be so. A servant of God moves two steps, by which he advances beyond others.

(1.) He serves God, and so goes beyond the profane careless generation in the world, who mind nothing but the world, the profits and pleasures which are in it: Phil. iii. 19, "Whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, and who mind earthly things." As for the service of God, they are free of it, they are sons of Belial, and go without a yoke; they are the serpent's seed, on their belly they go, and dust is their only meat; the duties of religion they make no conscience of.

(2.) He makes God's service his business, and so goes beyond the formalist who serves God, but makes not God's service his chief work. The hypocrite has always one thing which goes above all other things with him; but that is the world, or some one lust or other, not the one thing needful, which is the chief thing the servant of God is ever in quest of.

We have heard already the marks of a person who makes religion his business. Try yourselves by these, whether God's service be your grand object in the world, and if you serve him with the whole man, &c., as described in the second head. I come now,

3. To an use of exhortation.—I exhort you to evidence yourselves to be the Lord's servants, by serving him.—And with this design I beseech you,

(1.) To enter to his service, and serve him. Serve him in your salvation and generation work, in external and internal service, in stated and continual service, in doing or suffering service, in ordinary and extraordinary service. Put your hand and heart to the several pieces of service to which he calls you. And I would recommend in this case to you,

[1.] Be attentive to your Master's orders, and labour to know his mind, as to what may be your duty; Psalm cxxiii. 2, "Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us." Consult his word, which contains his orders to his servants, and read the Bible as the book of your instructions. Take the providential hints of duty he gives you: for he has said, Psalm xxxii. 8, "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." Be always willing to know his will, and make application to him by prayer, for the discovery of it in

particular cases, especially such as are difficult: do nothing with a doubting conscience.

[2.] Be willing servants, not refractory and wilful. Follow the example of Abraham, who obeyed, and went out, not knowing whither he went, Heb. xi. 8. The Master's orders being known, do not dispute them, but readily obey them. Choose not the work you will do, whether it be suffering or doing work, whatever the burden be which he lays on you, bow your shoulders to bear it; the cross he lays down, do you be ready to take it up. For it becomes him to command, and us to obey.

[3.] Weary not of your work: James i. 4, "But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." However hard you apprehend your task to be, give not way to wearying of it: Gal. vi. 9, "And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." We should think all light while we are out of hell. Impatience betrays us into the hands of the adversary, who is ready to offer his hellish help to those who are weary of the task God has laid on them; of which we have dreadful instances, which may make all of us tremble, and resolve through grace to bear till himself give deliverance.

[4.] When you are checked for your mismanagements, or corrected on account of them, learn this property of a good servant, not to answer again, Tit. ii. 9. Murmuring under the rebukes of providence is very unbecoming, and highly provoking in God's sight: Lam. iii. 39, "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" They who enter into the family of God, must not think it strange that they have to submit to the discipline of the house.—I would exhort you,

(2.) To hold by his service, as the great business which you have to do in the world. Never give it over, but pursue it as the grand business of your life, for doing which you were sent into the world. You have many things to do: but this is the one thing above all other things; O give it the preference in your hearts and lives. Never reckon that your other business goes well, when this does not; nor ill, when this goes well. Hold on it, till death loose you, and you have accomplished, as an hireling, your days.—As to this I will recommend to you,

[1.] Serve him honestly and uprightly: Joshua xxiv. 14, "Now, therefore, fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth." Let him be your only Lord and Master; and while you profess to serve God, give not a secret service to any idol; for there is no hiding the matter from your heavenly Master. You are in God's account, what you are inwardly in heart.

[2.] Serve him cheerfully with heart and good-will. He is the best of masters, and desires none to serve him for nought. To be heartless in his service, as if it were a drudgery, is very displeasing to him: Deut. xxviii. 47, 48, "Because thou servest not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the Lord shall send against thee in hunger and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee."

[3.] Serve him fervently and zealously: Rom. xii. 11, "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Our God is the living God, and he requires his servants to be lively, their hearts stirring within them in his service. The greatest love which ever appeared being shewed by our Lord, this doubtless requires such a return.

[4.] Serve him diligently and laboriously: Acts xxvi. 7, "Unto which hope, our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come." Why should we grudge pains for him who thought not his own life too much for us? The servants of sin and Satan are indefatigable, alas! that the servants of God should be so slothful.—To prevail with you in complying with this exhortation, I shall lay before you the following motives:—

Mot. 1. If you be not the servants of God, you are the servants of the devil: John viii. 44, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." There is never a spare servant in this case. If the sinner depart from God, whose he is, and whom he ought to serve, presently Satan picks him up as a stray, and sets him to his work; and his service is sad service.—To make this appear, you may consider,—(1.) His work is sin. Satan is the Egyptian task-master, who seduces poor mortals, who will not work out their own salvation. He puts another task in their hand, to work out their own ruin and destruction. And is not this the work about which most of the world are busy, who are twisting cords of guilt every day to bind their souls under God's wrath?—(2.) His wages is death, eternal death: "For the wages of sin is death," Rom. vi. 22. Satan goes about, like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. He is the father of lies, has had a long trade of it, deceiving poor sinners, catching some with one bait, some with another; that first he may be a prevailing tempter, and then a cruel tormentor, who, because he is beyond hope himself, would wish to have all the world as miserable as himself.

Mot. 2. God is the best of Masters, and his service is the best of service. This have all the saints witnessed, and so shall all of you, upon a full trial of it.—To make this good, consider,

(1.) That it is the most honourable service. He who serves God, serves him who is the fountain of all honour: Psalm xxxvi. 9, "For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light." Surely it is far more honourable to be a servant of the Lord, than to be a mighty king. What great work is there at times to get into the service of great men, especially of kings and princes! but O! why so little to get into the service of the King of kings?—Consider,

(2.) That it is the most rational service: Rom. xii. 1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Is he not our Creator, our Redeemer, our Sanctifier, our universal Benefactor, and our covenanted God? Is there any who has that right to our service which he has? Can it be our interest so much to be in the service of any other as it is to be in his service?—Consider,

(3.) That it is the most pleasant and comfortable service; Prov. iii. 17, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." There is a joy in the service of God, even the hardest of it all, which, whoso tastes of, will not exchange Christ's cross for the world's crown. Hear the Psalmist's judgment of it: Psalm lxxxiv. 10, "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." How did Hannah rejoice after a prayer! the eunuch after a sealing ordinance! If some find it not to be so pleasant, it is either because their nature is not renewed at all, or grace is low, and corruption strong.

(4.) Consider that it is the most advantageous service. Never was service so rewarded as God's service is. There is a reward in hand, which accompanies the work: Psalm xix. 11, "In keeping of thy commandments, there is a great reward." There is also a reward in hope,—the eternal weight of glory. They shall be courtiers of the King of heaven in glory for evermore: Rev. xxii. 3, "And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be on their foreheads." Amen.

GOD'S GRACIOUS CALL AND PRECIOUS PROMISE, CONSIDERED.*

SERMON XLIII.

PSALM lxxxi. 10,

Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.

THE great design of the gospel, and of all gospel-ordinances, is to make souls happy, and for this end to bring them to God through Christ, in whom they may find solid and complete satisfaction. All men desire to be happy; they are conscious to themselves of wants, which the natural desire of happiness influence them to get supplied. But, alas! they apply to improper quarters, and suck at those breasts which can never fill them, even those of their lusts. Since Adam forsook God for the creature, mankind have been so intoxicated with creature-sweetness, that they stand as it were chained at the creature's door, begging satisfaction, even after a thousand denials. They cannot lift their eyes to the Lord, they cannot move their feet towards him, till grace break the bands of iron and brass with which they are held.

In the text, the Lord comes to sinners as thus situated, and outbids all others which they in their hearts and lives are following after; and he does this even while they will not look over their shoulder to him, from their madness on their idols. This is the scope of the text: for in this verse the Lord pleads the grand purpose of love laid down, ver. 9, which is, that they should renounce all others for him, give up with their idols, and take him for and instead of all. And to enforce this, he thus reasons with them: 1. I have done for you what all your idols never did, and never could have done, "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt." Where were all your strange gods, when Pharaoh refused to let you go? Deut. xxxii. 11, "So the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him." Look to all the real good that ever you met with, and say, Was it the Lord or your idols that did it for you?—2. I will do and can do for you, what they cannot all do for you: "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it abundantly." Many a time you have opened your mouths, and wide enough, to your idols; so wide that it has been no small pain to get them shut again; and yet they remain still empty for them, they were never

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filled. But says the Lord, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Where more particularly observe,

1. That there is an emptiness supposed in poor sinners, which needs to be filled. They have lost God, and a thousand worlds cannot fill up his room. That man who has Christ in his heart, has enough to satisfy him, want what he will. And let a man have what he will, if he has not Christ in him, he has not what can satisfy him. All the devil's trash can never fill the heart; many an empty space is in that heart where Christ is not; which plagues them with a dog-like appetite, which is never satisfied.

2. There is a fill proposed and offered to empty sinners. This is a soul-fill; a filling with all the fulness of God. This is the only thing which can fill the mouth of the soul, which is the mouth meant in the text; for it is an easy thing to find among the creatures a fill to the mouth of the body, which can hold but little; but the whole creation cannot fill the mouth of the soul. The Lord only can fill it, he only can satisfy and still the restless soul, and so make it, after many years, disappear, and fall asleep in the bosom of God; and after the most pinching straits to say, "I have all, and abound." —We have,

3. The party communicating this soul-fill to the sinner: *I*, more generally, "I the Lord," in opposition to strange gods. That fill you could never get from your idols, you shall have from me. More particularly, it is Jesus Christ, the second person, the great treasurer of heaven, and steward of the fulness of God. It is plain that it is the same Lord who brought the Israelites out of Egypt; and this was no other but Christ, who was known under the Old Testament by the God of Israel, Exod. iii. 2—8. It was he who wrought that deliverance, as a type and pledge of the great redemption. It was he whom the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire did represent, even God vailed with flesh. He who brought them out of the land of Egypt, he whom they tempted in the wilderness, and this was Christ; 1 Cor. x. 19, "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents."—We have,

4. The sinner's duty in order to this communication: "Open thy mouth wide." The word here used is, in Gen. xxvi. 22, rendered "making room." O the freedom of grace! only make room for a fill, and ye shall have it. Let the soul only, as an hungry infant, lay its mouth by faith on the breasts of Christ's consolations, and they shall flow abundantly. If the spiritual appetite be not wanting, ye shall have a fill; and what can be desired more? unless we would have him to force it upon us. Open thy mouth, do not keep

it close, and say you will have none of him. Open to receive, and he will give. Open it wide, the wider you open, the more that your souls desire of him, you shall get the more. I cannot think the wideness in the text is intended to straiten the offer, but rather informs us that there is a fulness in Christ, sufficient to satisfy the most extended desires of the soul.—From this subject, I take the following

DOCTRINE, That Christ Jesus can and will fill the soul whose mouth is opened wide to receive of and from him.—For illustrating this doctrine, I shall,

I. Shew what it is to open the mouth of the soul wide to Christ.

II. How Christ fills the soul, so as no other can do. And then,

III. Conclude with some improvement.—We are then,

I. To shew what it is to open the mouth of the soul wide to Christ.—This opened mouth consists,

1. In a sight of wants. The soul must be brought to a sight of its own emptiness, ere it will open its mouth for a fill from the Lord: Prov. xxvii. 7, "The full soul loatheth an honey-comb: but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." The want of this was Laodicea's ruin. She thought herself rich, and increased in goods, and having need of nothing, and knew not that she was wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. When Christ comes to the soul, he says to it, as he did to the blind man, "What will ye that I should do unto you?" He makes persons sensible of their diseases, before he applies the remedy, that his free grace may thus be glorified. Jesus, by his word and Spirit, gives the soul a view of God in his glory; and then the soul cries, I want peace with God: a Mediator, a Christ to stand betwixt me and his consuming fire. He gives the soul a view of the tribunal of God, before which it must soon appear: and then it cries, Ah! I want a righteousness, a better righteousness than my own, a complete and everlasting righteousness, without which I can never appear with acceptance before this tribunal.—A view of his sins: and then he cries, Where shall I find pardon?—A view of what the law requires, and of what the sinner is in himself: and then he cries, Ah! I am all wants. I have nothing of myself good, and can do nothing. —This opened mouth consists,

2. In a sense of need. Persons may see their want of those things who are not pinched with felt need, but reign as kings without Christ, and say unto God, Job xxi. 14, 15, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? And what profit should we have if we pray unto him?" But the soul whose mouth is opened wide, says,

with the prodigal, "How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" Luke xv. 17. They find that they are undone without Christ. The soul is pressed with that question, What shall I do to be saved? No happiness to the soul without the enjoyment of God, and no enjoyment of him, but through Christ the Mediator between God and man.—This opened mouth consists,

3. In a holy dissatisfaction with all things besides Christ. Clothe a starving man with scarlet, and fill his pockets with gold, and advance him to the highest honours; all this is not meat, and therefore he cannot be satisfied. And to the hungry soul there is none, nothing but Christ, which can give satisfaction. They loathe their lusts, which they loved before. A thousand worlds will not satisfy the soul which sees its need of Christ. When the soul comes to itself again, after it has gone the round of the whole creation for satisfaction, it returns with the report, Eccl. i. 2, "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanites, all is vanity." It finds at length that the bed is shorter than that one can stretch himself upon it.—This opened mouth consists,

4. In the soul's removing its desires from off vanities, and fixing them on Christ for satisfaction. Like the hungry infant, which has been sucking in vain at this and the other object which was nearest it, and could never rest; when the breast is put in its mouth, it opens its mouth, and fixes there to suck. The soul gives over the pursuit of happiness in lusts, he finds that gall and wormwood are now on these breasts. It ceases from hammering its happiness out of the law, and finds that there is no pleasing that rigorous husband; the ladder of their duties has so often broken with them, that they despair of ever climbing to heaven this way. And so, like men out of breath, in seeking their happiness from other things than Christ, they lie down before the Lord, turning their eyes towards him, that he may take them up, and give them what in vain they have been looking for elsewhere. Their language is, Jer. iii. 23, "Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains; truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel."—This opened mouth consists,

5. In an assured expectation of salvation from Christ: Hos. xiv. 3, "Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the works of our hands, Ye are our gods; for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy." Matth. xxi. 22, "And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." The soul believes that Christ can do it: and so far believes he will do it, as that it ventures on him. Without this, the soul cannot

open its mouth to Christ, but shuts it without hope. Though the hopes may be very faint, yet the trembling hand may receive Christ, and the quivering mouth may be filled.—This opened mouth consists,

Lastly, In a hearty willingness to receive Christ as he offers himself in the gospel. Christ says, "I am the bread of life;" the soul is well content to receive him as such, for all and instead of all. They fed on the husks before, and loathed the manna; now nothing relishes so well with them as the bread which came down from heaven. They are brought over all their objections against him, and are well content to venture their souls on him, as it is he alone who can fill them with all the fulness of God.—We now proceed,

II. To shew how Christ fills the soul so as no other can do: "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." This promise imports four things.—It imports,

1. Such a suitableness in him to the necessities of the soul, as is to be found in no other. Sinners seeking a fill of the creatures, are but feeding on wind, which can never satisfy. There is no suitableness betwixt the desires of an immortal soul, and the produce of this earth: Isa. lv. 2, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." What avail riches, honours, and pleasures, to a soul pressed with guilt! But Christ is suited to all the wants of the soul. Speaking of the excellence, suitableness, and fulness of his salvation, he says, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear: and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see," Rev. iii. 18. His blood and Spirit will answer all cases which the soul can be in.—The words import,

2. That there is a sufficiency in Christ for all their needs: Col. i. 19, "It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell." There is enough in him to satisfy all the desires of the soul. Persons may travel through the whole creation, ere they find an object commensurable to the desires of their souls; but when the soul comes to Christ, it then and there finds an object, than which the soul, when extending its desires to the utmost, cannot crave more. Here, though our boundless desires should launch forth into this ocean, they shall never be able to reach the bottom, or find the shore.—The words import,

3. That there is a communication of this suitable sufficiency unto that soul which opens its mouth wide to receive it. Thus,

(1.) Christ gives himself to that soul, so that such an one might

say, Song ii. 16, "My beloved is mine, and I am his;" or, with Thomas, cry, "My Lord, and my God." They have him by the surest tenor of an indissoluble union; John vi. 56, "He that eateth my flesh," says Jesus, "and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him," A wicked man may have many poor *mys*, Dan. iv. 30, compare chap. ii. 47. But they cannot call God theirs; and besides, they want a thousand things more than what they have. But what want can they have who want Jesus, who is all in all?

(2.) Christ gives them all good with himself: Rom. viii. 32, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Psalm lxxxiv. 11, "For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Having a right to himself, they may write their names upon, and claim a title to, all that are his. They are rich, seeing they are married to Jesus, the heir of all things. No sooner does the soul close with Christ, than they get this right; and though they get not all presently in hand, yet they have all in hope; a hope of which they will never be ashamed.—The words import,

4. The soul's satisfaction upon that communication. In what measure the soul opens its mouth to Christ, in that measure Christ communicates of his fulness; for this is the standing rule, "According to thy faith, so be it unto thee." And in what measure Christ communicates of himself to the soul, so the soul has that satisfaction. Accordingly the soul rests in Christ, and having enough in him, never goes out, as it was wont, to beg at the world's door: John iv. 14, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up to everlasting life." "It is enough," said Jacob, "Joseph is yet alive." When all the cisterns are dried up, the believer has enough. He can rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of his salvation, Hab. iii. 17. He can say also with Paul, Phil. iv. 18, "But I have all, and abound." I am full; and no wonder, for the soul having Christ, has,

(1.) A fulness of merit to look to: 1 John i. 7, "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." When the soul looks within itself, it sees a fulness of guilt, debt, misery, and poverty. It sees heart, lips, life, and duties, all full of sin; sins which tears of blood and rivers of oil cannot wash away. But, looking to Christ, it sees a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, Zech. xiii. 1. The rock struck by the rod of justice, and the waters gushing out, and following them through the wilderness, a sea to overwhelm all their guilt! Mic. vii. 19, "He will turn again, he

will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."—The soul sees,

(2.) A fulness of spirit in Christ to take away the power of sin. He hath the seven Spirits of God, Rev. iii. 1. When they look within themselves, they see a very scanty measure of the Spirit. When they look above them to the Head, they see it there without measure poured out upon their Head, to that very end that it may go down to the skirts of his garments, even to every member of his mystical body.—The soul sees,

(3.) A fulness of grace in him, lodged in him as the common storehouse of all the saints: John i. 16, "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." If they want wisdom, or righteousness, or sanctification, they have it in him: 1 Cor. i. 30, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." They have all in him; and seeing God treats with them no other way but as in him, they are complete in him, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, who is the Head of all principality and power."—I come now,

III. To conclude with some short improvement. And this only in a use of exhortation.

I would exhort you, then, to come to Christ with enlarged desires, that your souls may be filled. I direct you to one who can give your souls full satisfaction. Open your mouths wide, O communicants! Open your mouths wide, one and all of you, make enlarged demands from Christ the Saviour.—To prevail with you in complying with this exhortation, I offer you the following motives:—

Mot. 1. Ye have many times opened your mouths wide to the world, and your lusts, but were you to this day ever filled? Prov. xxiii. 5, "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle towards heaven." Have you not enlarged your desires as hell? If there had been any satisfaction which you could have got out of Christ, have you not squeezed so hard as that you would certainly have pressed it out? But you have never got it, and never shall get it there. Come, then, to Christ, and try him.

Mot. 2. Has not the world and your lusts ofttimes rewarded your love with hatred? When you have been hammering for satisfaction at these things, have you not struck fire instead of water, out of these barren rocks, and lain down in sorrow? O! if you had bestowed that strength of affection and desire on Christ, which you have on these things, ye had never been so rewarded.

Mot. 3. If Christ fills you not, you shall never be filled. Many have sucked at these breasts which you are on, but never one came speed; as little shall you; Eccl. ii. 12, "And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which has been already done?" There was a sign of emptiness hung out at the creature's door in paradise, the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And has that vanity which sin subjected them to since filled up that emptiness? No, no. Ah! you shall as soon grasp your arms full of shadows and dreams, as fill your souls without Christ.

Mot. 4. Consider that Christ can and will fill your souls, if you will only open your mouths wide, and receive him.—For consider,

(1.) That all fulness is in him: Col. i. 19, "For it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." He is the storehouse of all fulness: it dwells in him, it can never be missed there. The fulness of the Godhead dwelleth in him bodily, Col. ii. 9. Can there be ever any want with him?—Consider,

(2.) That the fulness that is in him is to be communicated by him: John i. 16, "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." It is lodged there to be communicated from him to poor souls: Zech. xiii. 1, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." The fulness of Christ is not the fulness of a vessel, but of a fountain that casts forth its waters, and yet hath still enough.—Consider,

(3.) That it belongs to him, and to him alone, to distribute that fulness: John v. 22, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." He is the great steward of the fulness of God. The keys hang at his girdle. Never any soul was filled, but whom he filled. The Father directs the hungry soul to his Son: Matth. xvii. 5, "This," says he, "is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him." The Spirit points you to Christ. And Christ is saying to you what Joseph said to his Father and brethren: Gen. xlv. 9—11, "Haste you, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt; come down unto me, tarry not. And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou and thy children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast. And there will I nourish thee, (for yet there are five years of famine), lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty."—Consider,

(4.) That you have his word for it, that he will do it: Isa. lv. 1, "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that

hath no money, come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price." John vi. 37, "All that the Father hath given me, shall come unto me, and him that cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out." And you have the testimony of them who have gone before you: Luke i. 52, 53, "He has exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things."

Here, however, there may be proposed this objection. Is it possible for a person to find satisfaction in such a course, turning his back on the world and its lusts? Answ. Come and see. The saints have found and do find satisfaction, and this such as has made them despise the smiles and frown of the world: Psalm iv. 7, "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time when their corn and their wine increased: Heb. xi. 24—26, "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Esteeming the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of reward." Is there any perfection or sweetness in the creature but what comes from God? does not the whole creation shine with borrowed light? If so, then God must be more sweet, infinitely more sweet, than all the creatures, even if combined together. And does not the natural constitution of the soul call for the enjoyment of an infinite good? It must then be the greatest reality.

Still, however, some may press this objection, But will he fill me who am full of sin? Answ. Christ fills freely, as freely as the rain falls, and the sun shines, without hire, and his fulness will wear out the fulness of sin: Isa. i. 18, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red as crimson, they shall be as wool." Amen.

THE NATURE AND SOURCE OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.*

SERMON XLIV.

John vi. 57,

He that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

You have been eating the bread of the Lord: who those are who have done this may be already known; happy are those who

* Delivered at Wamphray, Monday, July 2, 1711, immediately after the dispensation of the Lord's supper.

have ate that bread which is the Lord; who these are must be discovered by the effects. Persons will readily look like their meat: they who have ate Christ will look like Christ, seeing this food has a transforming virtue, there will be such a difference betwixt them and others as that mentioned in Dan. i. 15, "Their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat." Living bread will make living lively souls: "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me."—In which words we have,

1. The character and privilege of a believer: "He shall live," viz. the life of God, from which others are alienated. To his natural life, common with others, by which he is distinguished from things without life, he shall have another of a more sublime nature, by which he shall rise superior to other men who are dead in sin, while they live a natural life: he shall live spiritually and eternally.

2. We have the spring from whence the believer derives this supernatural life of his, in its beginning, progress, and continuation. It is not from himself, he is but a branch, not a root; it is not immediately from God, as Adam's, but from the Mediator, Jesus Christ. The justice and holiness of God refused an intermediate union with the sinful creature, yet there could be no life but as proceeding from God, the prime fountain of all, and there could be no communication of this life without union with him; wherefore it pleased God to unite the human nature to the divine in the person of his Son, and so to make him the Mediator, the mean of the sinner's union and communion with the Father; that he deriving life from his Father, they might again derive it from him. This is the import of the former part of the verse, in which Christ shews how he comes to be living bread. 1. He is fitted for giving life, seeing he lives by the Father, deriving life from the Fountain of life. 2. There is a divine appointment of him by the Father, by which he was ordained and set apart to be life-giving bread to his people.

3. We have the way how this life is derived from Christ to the soul, and this is by eating him, that is, by faith. It cannot be understood of a corporeal eating, for this eating would not give life: John vi. 63, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing." Our Lord himself determines it to be believing, ver. 35, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." The word here used properly signifies a keen appetite, being the same as in Matth. xxiv. 35, and may denote unto us that greedy appetite which the believer has after Christ, his soul-food, and that there is no hazard of excess

here, either in the appetite which obtains, or in the continuance at this blessed work; we may eat all the day long, and also in the night, and welcome. Yea, it is remarkable that it is not said, He that hath eaten, that has got a taste of Christ, and is satisfied; but "he that eateth," denoting a continuing action, such as he that breathes, lives. There must be a constant improvement of Christ as the fountain of life, a living by believing: Gal. ii. 20, "And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

4. We have the peculiar interest of the believer in this life: "*Even he* shall live by me." All others are, and will be dead while they live; he, and only he, shall live; for there is no life but from Christ, and none from him but by faith.—From the words I take this

DOCTRINE, That the believer lives by Christ, deriving his life from him by faith.—For illustrating this doctrine, I shall,

I. Shew what is that life which the believer lives by Christ, and derives from him.

II. How the believer derives this life from Christ by faith. And then,

III. Conclude with some improvement.—We are,

I. To shew what is that life which the believer lives by Christ, and derives from him.—As to this I observe,

1. That the believer derives from Christ a life of grace, and lives by him, in opposition to that death in sin under which all unbelievers are: Eph. ii. 1, "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." The believer has infused into him an inward vital principle of action; formerly the whole powers of his soul were buried in the grave of sin, devoid of all life and sense in spiritual things. Now the dead are raised, the dry bones have come together, and stand upon their feet. The dead soul could never have infused life into itself, but would have eternally rotted in the grave of sin, if the spirit of Christ had not entered into it, and Christ become the life of the soul: Psalm xvi. 11, "Thou wilt shew me the path of life." As the life of the body lies in the union of the soul with the body, so the life of the soul lies in its union with God through Christ. And as it was by eating, Gen. iii. 6, that mankind were separated from God, and laid in the dust of death, so it is by eating that the soul comes to be re-united to God, and to live again in Christ: John vi. 53, 56, "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him."—The believer derives from Christ,

2. A life of favour with God: Psalm xxx. 5, "In his favour is life." We are naturally dead in law, under a sentence of condemnation, the broken law has doomed us to eternal death: Gal. iii. 10, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." But the sentence against the believer is reversed, he is no more a condemned man, but is justified: Rom. viii. 1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." Now he is a free man; who can lay any thing to his charge? "It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?" Can justice say any thing? it is satisfied. Can the law? it has got all its demands upon them in Christ: Gal. iii. 13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us." What is become of those long accounts of their debts, subscribed with their own hands? Christ has blotted them out with his blood, put them out of the way, lest the criminal should fear that they yet may be read. The nails are driven through the writing, so that it is nailed to the cross, and hence will never appear more against them, Col. ii. 14. What has become of the face-covering, which was on the condemned man? Christ has destroyed in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations, Isa. xxv. 7. What is become of death which stood before him, ready to devour him? Ver. 8, "Christ has swallowed up death in victory." Glory, then, be to the Lamb, by whom we live. Ver. 9, "Lo, this is our God: we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."—The believer derives from Christ,

3. The new life of gospel-obedience and true holiness: Rom. vi. 4, 5, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we had been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." The believer is not now the man he once was, he is not only come out of the grave of his natural state, but he has cast off his grave-clothes: Col. iii. 8, "But now ye also put off all these, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth." These reigning lusts are laid aside, for the Lord hath said, "Loose him and let him go." He has put on Christ, personates him, as the beggar in borrowed robes represents a king on the stage. There is none resembles Christ in his life among men, so near as the believer does; for he labours to walk, even as he also walked. Now his obedience is universal. He has respect unto all God's commandments, Psalm cxix. 9. His heart is

enlarged in breadth and length to the law of Christ. He loves those ways which he formerly hated, and hates those which he formerly loved. His obedience is a cluster of vital acts in the soul, of all which Christ is the principle: Gal. ii. 20, "I am crucified," saith he, "with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." As Christ is the principle, so he is also the end of the believer's life: Phil. i. 21, "For to me to live," says he, "is Christ, and to die is gain." O! whence comes this new life! surely it could never be struck out of vows, resolutions, and Christless endeavours, nor hammered out of the united force of the whole powers of the soul, called forth together as in a solemn day. But they have been planted together with Christ, Rom. vi. 5, (quoted above). Therefore they rise up with him, in the likeness of his resurrection. An eternal barrenness had shut up their womb: but being married to Christ, who is risen from the dead, they now bring forth fruit unto God, Rom. vii. 4.—The believer derives from Christ,

4. A life of activity in grace, as springing water is accounted living water: Psalm lxxx. 18, "So will we not go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name." Sometimes the believer is at a low ebb with his graces. Faith, the conduit-pipe, by which life comes into the soul, is stopped, and then all the flowers in his garden, the believer's graces, begin to hang down their heads, and wither. The weeds of corruption begin to thrive. What shall become of the soul then? There is still one ground of hope, it is not like the false path of the hypocrite, laid short of the fountain, in which all communication is cut off, and this is the reason why their common graces go back, and never rise again; but the faith of the true believer remains still a bond of union betwixt Christ and the soul, and therefore says he, John xiv. 19, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Christ puts in his hand at the hole of the door, his Spirit opens the means of conveyance, and influences again flow, which put quite a new face upon the soul: Hos. xiv. 7, "They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon." Christ speaks life, and thus the coldrife soul begins to glow: Luke xxiv. 32, "And they said one to another, Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" Fire is brought from the altar of burnt-offering, and this is set to the incense of their prayers which lay downwards before, and then they mount up like pillars of smoke.—The believer derives from Christ,

5. A life of growth in grace; life, and more life: John x. 10, "I am come," says Jesus, "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Things which have life, grow in the growing time, and grace is of a growing nature: Prov. iv. 18, "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." The trees planted in the house of God, even the righteous, shall flourish like the palm-tree: he shall grow like the cedar in Lebanon. "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God," Psalm xcii. 12, 13. They do not indeed grow always; and why, but because they do not eat always? they have their sick fits, when they lose their appetite, and then may they say, My leanness! my leanness! neither is their growth always discernible; they may notwithstanding be growing. The kingdom of God in the soul is like seed cast into the ground, which springs and grows up, one knows not how, Mark iv. 26, 27. But they grow sometimes; there are golden spots of time, when the dew of heaven lies on their branches, so that they will be adding a cubit to their spiritual stature. And all this is derived from Christ: Mal. iv. 2, "But unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves in the stall." It is their being planted by the Lord which produces this;—their waiting on him; Isa. xl. 31, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary, and they shall walk, and not faint." And this growth which they have from him has a beauty which that wants which arises from any other quarter. It is universal, regular, and proportionable; Eph. iv. 15, "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up to him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." They are not as others, who, like the rickety child, have a big head, but a slender body; but all comes away together under influences from Christ. They grow inwardly in close walking with God, the soul cleaving more closely with Christ: They grow outwardly in good words and works, which are more communicative and edifying to others; they grow upwardly in heavenly-mindedness, and contempt of the world; and in the meantime also downwardly in humility and self-loathing.—The believer derives from Christ,

6. A life of comfort: as 1 Sam. xxv. 26, "Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be to all thou hast."—This life of comfort may be considered,

(1.) As it denotes the ordinary rest of the soul, in having something that satisfies it. The soul of man is a weak empty thing, which must have something to which it leans, and upon which it

feeds. Those who want Christ, they lean to other things. The believer has something also upon which he stays his soul, by which he lives, and this is Christ; he feeds on him, satisfying his soul in him; and this in opposition to the lusts of the world, without which the carnal world have no satisfaction, having never relished as much sweetness in Christ as in their lusts: But, "whosoever," says Jesus, John iv. 14, "drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." They shall no more suck, as they were wont to do, their comfort out of these breasts, as in the day when their navel was not cut, Ezek. xvi. 4. They feed on Christ in opposition to outward comforts, or enjoyments in the world. I confess the believer may at a time lay overmuch stress on these, and then the comfort soon runs out, Psalm cxliii. 3, 4. But his great stress lies always on Christ, and therefore he can stand without them on him. Though they all fail, he can, with Habakkuk, chap. iii. 18, "rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of their salvation." May I add, believers feed on Christ in opposition to inward precious enjoyments they have from him? Even good frames, enlargements, inherent grace, these are indeed too weak supports for the soul, which is so weighty, upon which it may lean. The great stay of the believer is not the grace of God within him, which is a well whose streams are often dry; but the grace of God without him, in Christ, which is an everlasting fountain, to which they can never come wrong; therefore, Phil. iii. 3, "They rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."—This life of comfort may be considered,

(2.) As it denotes the lifting up of the soul from under discouragements and breaking dispensations, with which the believer is sometimes trysted. Sometimes they can sing in a prison, and their souls leap within them under outward pressures: Heb. x. 34, "They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they have a better and an enduring substance." Whence is this joy derived? Paul tells us, 2 Cor. i. 5, "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." Yea, but they often feel inward pressures, their discharge falls by, they lose sight of their pardon, and the law raises up a process against them for a debt already paid; God hides his face, the soul is wounded, and who can bear it? Yet after all, when they get to their feet again, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, the wounds of the soul are healed. Whence is all this? See Job xxxiii. 23, 24. But what comes of the poor body? ver. 21. See ver. 25. Yea, the bones must say, Who is like unto thee?—The believer derieves from Christ,

7. And lastly, eternal life, which in effect is nothing other than the present life brought to perfection, and extended to eternity: 2 Cor. iii. 18, "But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." This is derived from Christ: "I am," says Jesus, John vi. 51, "the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever." By him it is they shall live for ever in glory, seeing he shall remain the eternal bond of union betwixt God and the saints, and the medium of communion: Heb. vii. 26, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Rev. vii. 17, "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.—We now proceed,

II. To shew how the believer derives this life from Christ by faith.—For this purpose consider,

1. That faith unites the soul to Christ, receiving Christ into the heart, as the meat we eat is received into our bodies, and incorporates with them: John vi. 56, "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." Seeing, then, faith makes us members of Christ, it must needs make us living souls, partakers of the same Spirit which actuates the Head. Faith knits the soul as a branch to the vine, whereby it partakes of the sap. And it lays down the soul at the fountain of life, and knits it to Christ the Head of influences.

2. Faith applies Christ and his fulness to the soul for life according to its needs: "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me," even as by eating we receive the sap and strength of the meat for our nourishment. Christ offers himself as the fountain of life, faith accepts, and on the acceptance applies him. Faith, as the mouth of the soul, sucks here, and so lives by him, as he lives by the Father, Gal. ii. 20, (quoted above.)

3. Faith presses the promises through which the golden oil runs; Psalm cxix. 49, "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." All the influences of grace run in the channel of the covenant, which is the word of divine appointment, upon that bread which we eat by faith: Isa. lix. 2, "As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord, my Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever." Each of these promises are full of the fulness of Christ to

the believer. Sometimes they drop out at will to the soul: Isa. lxv. 1, "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name." But it is not always so. What should a person then do? He should go and press the sap out of them by faith, and put God to the fulfilling of his word; Ezek. xxxvi. 37, "Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them."—Against a complying with this advice, some may propose this

Objection, But I dare not meddle with a promise. Answ. Then meddle not with life. Is a drowning man so fearful, that he dare not catch hold of a rope let out to draw him to land? O no! if your soul be content with Christ, though the promise be in your eyes like Moses' rod, which was turned into a serpent, take it by the tail, and it will be a rod of life to you.—Still the objection may be, But the qualifications of the promise stave me off. Answ. Go to Christ, in the free promise to all who will take him, Isa. lv. 1; John vi. 37, "All that the Father giveth me, shall come unto me: and him that cometh to me, I will in nowise cast out." Many bar the door of the promises with bars of their own making, and then complain they cannot enter. Say not, If I had so much love, repentance, brokenness of heart, I would believe. If you be wise, you will believe that you shall get these things: Zech xii. 10, "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for an only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." Acts v. 31, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."

4. Faith relishes the sweetness of Christ in general, and the sweetness of every part of Christ in particular: "Hearken diligently unto me," says he, Isa. lv. 2, "and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." And O this is life to the soul! it makes the whole soul flee away from the world and lusts, after him. "O!" says faith, "thy spirit is good!" "O! then," adds the soul, "lead me to the land of uprightness." "Thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee." His words are good, and are as the best of wine, when it goes down sweetly, it causes the lips of those that are asleep to speak, Song vii. 5. Faith discovers Christ in his glory,—in the glory of his person; and then all the world is but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of him.—In the glory of his righte-

ousness; then who can lay any thing to their charge?—In the glory of his Spirit; and then the strongest lusts will get an assault. The soul will triumph over them.—I come now,

III. To make some practical improvement of the whole. Here I confine myself to a short use of information and exhortation.

1. From this subject we may learn, that Christless sinners are dead withered branches, ready to be cast over the hedge, Ye live not at all, because ye live not by Christ. Ye have not taken him for the food of your souls, and therefore no other prospect presents itself to you, but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation, ready to devour the adversaries.

2. This lets us see who those are who will persevere and not apostatise, even those who eat Christ by faith. Some there are, who appear very lively at a communion or so, but they quickly wither; why?—because they have not the living Spirit of God in them, they lie not at the fountain. The streams must be dry, when communion with the fountain is stopped. But those who are knit to Christ, and cleave to him, shall partake of his spirit, and so shall never fall away from grace, John iv. 14, (quoted above.)

I would conclude, exhorting you to an eating of Christ by faith, in order to your living by him. And therefore,

1. Study to make it appear that your greedy appetite after that dust, which is the serpent's meat, and the meat of the serpent's brood, is now blunted. Shew that you hunger and thirst no more after it. You must not now feed on the world and your former lusts. True, Christ finds his people with their navel cut, but he does not leave them so. If you have tasted the sweetness which is in Christ, your lusts will now have no sweetness at all. But if indeed you find no sweetness in him, your lusts, it is likely, will be strengthened, instead of being weakened by this communion; and this is dreadful, Prov. vii.

2. Derive your life from Christ, live by believing. It is a sad evidence of a decline, when there is no communication of the life of grace from him.

3. Live on Christ and learn to be content with him alone.

Lastly, Study to live to his glory; Phil. i. 21, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Amen.

THE FOLLY OF TURNING ASIDE FROM THE LORD.*

SERMON XLV.

1 SAM. xii. 21,

And turn ye not aside; for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain.

YE have been professing to forsake your wandering life through the empty creation, and to turn to the Lord as your portion, as your soul's rest, and as your great Lord and Master from henceforth. There is one thing of which I would persuade you, the faith of which would keep you ever with him; and this is, that if you were to change every day, you can never do better, never do so well. This is the scope of our text; in which we have Samuel's reason to the Israelites for their not turning aside from the Lord in any case; which is, "For then should we go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain."

These words (without any supplement, and to the same sense, but more forcibly expressed) may be read word for word thus: "And ye shall not turn aside, but after vain things," &c.; that is, ye cannot turn aside, but you must, by doing so, go after vain things. The text is a defiance held out to men in their attempts to mend their condition by departing from the Lord. In which there is,

1. A case supposed, which is, That they should turn aside from the Lord; and having done so, they have the wide world to choose upon, let them take to the right hand, or to the left, choose the best they can pitch on, some or all, that what is wanting in one, may be made up in another. This is the utmost extent to which it can be carried.—There is,

2. The determination in this case, which is expressed in the text with all confidence. Ye shall not, ye cannot for your hearts, turn aside, but after vain things; I defy you to find out a substantial good for yourselves in the whole creation, separate from God. Betake yourselves to what you will, to idols that are so already, to other things to make idols of them, make your best of them, you shall never make more of them than vanity, they are unprofitable, empty, helpless nothings.—From this subject I take the following

DOCTRINE, That no man shall mend his condition, but will ruin it, by turning aside from the Lord, let him turn to what hand soever he will.—For illustrating this doctrine, I shall,

* Delivered at Galashiels, on Sabbath, Sept. 6, 1719.

I. Offer some things for explaining this point.

II. Evince the truth of this weighty point.

III. Add the practical improvement.

We are then,

I. To offer some things for explaining this point.—Here I observe,

1. That no man, by turning aside from the Lord, shall mend his condition, but ruin it, in point of rest to his heart, and satisfaction to the desires of it: Isa. lvii. 19, 20, "I create the fruit of the lips; peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him. But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Every man's heart within him is naturally an hungry, empty thing, which must be filled from something without itself, or it cannot rest. Some, hearing of the soul's satisfaction to be had in God, come away to ordinances, and are for a time found about the Lord's hand, like the mixed multitude from Egypt among the Israelites. They do not at the very first find that satisfaction for which they look, and they cannot wait; but for haste to be filled, they go back to the world and their lusts. In this case, the more haste, the less speed; they are farther from it than ever.—I observe,

2. That no man, by turning aside from the Lord, shall mend his condition, but ruin it, in point of comfort and ease to his conscience; Psalm xxxii. 3, 5, "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." This is the true way to get ease. But some awakened sinners seek ease by their tears, confessions, resolutions, and the like, not by the blood of Christ: but, alas! those plasters will not stick, they will never draw out the thorn of guilt. Some divert the pain of conscience, by filling their hands and heads with business, like Cain. Some stifle it by sinning, yet more over the belly of convictions. But the sore healed with any of these, which are but mere palliatives, will break out more dreadfully than ever, though perhaps not till there is no remedy. And how is the case thus mended? is it not ruined?—I observe,

3. That no man, by turning aside from the Lord, shall mend his condition, but ruin it, in point of his interest and advantage: Jer. ii. 13, "For my people have committed two great evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns broken cisterns, that can hold no water." He who changes, changes

for what he accounts the better for himself; yet men often find themselves disappointed. Nothing draws persons more away from God than interest; but heaven shall be turned nethermost, and earth uppermost in the universe, ere any man, manage as securely as he will, shall ever be a gainer by turning aside from God. For this ye have the concurring testimony of all true penitents, whose eyes have been opened: Hos. ii. 7, "And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them; then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now."—I observe,

4. That no man, by turning aside from the Lord, will better his condition, but ruin it, in point of security from evil: Prov. xxviii. 18, "Whoso walketh uprightly, shall be saved; but he that is perverse in his ways, shall fall at once." Sin often promises, but can never afford a solid shelter. Any hiding-place or defence to which persons betake themselves, turning away from God, is but vanity, and cannot deliver; nay, it exposes them to the way of evil: Amos v. 19, "As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand upon the wall, and a serpent bit him." The Jews, in their crucifying of Christ, are a standing witness to this: John xi. 48, "If we let him alone," said they, "all men will believe on him, and the Romans shall come, and take away both our place and nation." Matth. xxii. 7, "But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city."—We now come,

II. To evince the truth of this weighty point. That no man shall mend his condition, but will ruin it, by turning aside from the Lord, let him turn to what hand soever he will.—We shall do this,

First, By considering to what a person turns aside when he turns from God.

Secondly, By taking a view of what he turns aside from. And,

Thirdly, By inspecting the pretended gain which he acquires by turning aside from the Lord.

First, We are to evince the truth of this weighty point, by considering to what a person turns aside when he turns from God. It is but vanity, which cannot profit or deliver. There are but two things to which a person can turn aside, though the particulars are numberless. The character agrees either,

1. To sin, that is, to sinful ways, courses, or practices. And while there is a God in heaven to avenge the afront, no man shall mend his condition in this way. You will not, indeed, want an invitation

to turn aside, and go in at this door; but know for a certain that it will ruin you, for "the dead are there, and her guests are in the depths of hell," Prov. ix. 18. Sin is the way in which you will never find rest to your souls; on the contrary, it will produce a sting to your conscience, a constant restlessness to your heart, and eternal ruin to the whole man, if mercy recover you not, and bring you back to God.—Or the character agrees,

2. To the creature, to which, when men are turning aside from God, they turn to seek their happiness. This comprehends all created comforts whatsoever. Of them we have two things to say.

(1.) They are all uncertain, a person can never get a sure hold of them: Prov. xxiii. 5, "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings, they flee away as an eagle towards heaven." Unchangeableness is an essential property of that which makes truly happy and fully satisfies, for otherwise the very fear of losing the thing mars the full rest of the heart in it. But where is this to be found but in God? The creature is so uncertain, that there is not one moment in which we may not either be taken from it, or it from us; so that a person may rest as well on the top of a wheel, as on any creature. And turning aside from God to it, is turning from the fountain to a cistern, which, in that very moment when a person goes to drink out of it, may run dry.

(2.) They are utterly insufficient. It is not in them to answer the cravings of the human heart, of an immortal soul. Hence it is said, Isa. lv. 2, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" [1.] There is no suitableness in them to the soul, for they are not commensurate to the desires of it; God only is so, being an infinite good. Wherefore, wherever you go to make your bed among them, you will find it shorter than you can stretch yourself upon. [2.] They have no divine appointment for that end, without which grass would be no more satisfying to the flocks than sand. God has kept the satisfying of the soul to himself, as his peculiar prerogative.—Therefore the turning aside to such emptiness can never make a man happy.—Here, however, may be stated this

OBJECTION, What! does not every body know that there is a goodness in the creature? ANSW. But every body should likewise know that it is uncertain and insufficient, and therefore not worth the turning aside to from a good God. Besides, know this farther, that no creature can be to thee more than this God, from whom thou turnest aside, makes it to be. So thou mayest get it, and at the same time there may come a withering curse with it, that thou

shalt find no more sap in it than Haman in his riches, family honours, which, by his own confession, availed him nothing, Esther, v. 13. Yea, thy ruin may rise from it, as Achan's from the golden wedge.

Secondly, For evincing the truth of this weighty point, consider what a person turns aside from, when turning aside from God. He turns from an upmaking portion; Psalm lxxiii. 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." Cleave to the Lord, turn not aside from him: for,

1. Thou art enriched for time: 1 Tim. iv. 8, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." The everlasting covenant secures all that thou needest. Thy provision is sure: Psalm xxxvii. 3, "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." Isa. xxxiii. 16, "He shall dwell on high, his place of defence shall be the munition of rocks; bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure." Thou shalt not want lodging: Psalm xc. 1, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations." Fear not want of clothing: Matth. vi. 30, "For if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" What want ye more, then? Why, some would have land also. Then cleave to Christ as thy Lord and Husband. He is Lord of all the land in the world; the earth shall be thine in the right of thy Husband: Matth. v. 5, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." But what will a person do for money? Why, cleave to the Lord: Job xxii. 24, 25, "Then shalt thou lay up gold as dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks. Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence, and thou shalt have plenty of silver." —Here some may propose this

OBJECTION, These are fine words, but what will they bring into our mouth, or on our back, what will they bring into the coffers? ANSW. They are God's words, and his words are better than all the world's good deeds. Some to whom God has no special love, he gives them their portion in their hand, and sets them off; others, who are his dear children, he gives them the good words of a promise, and keeps them at home with himself. Say now, which of these have the best of it? The following words determine it: Matth. xxv. 34, "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." God approves not of those men who say to the needy, Depart in peace, and be ye warmed, and be ye filled; notwithstanding, *they* give them not

those things which are needful to the body," James ii. 16. And will He himself treat his people so? No, no. Many a saint has trusted to these words, when they had nothing else to trust to, and they have all been made out to them: Psalm xxxiv. 8, 9, "O taste and see that the Lord is good! blessed is the man that trusteth in him. O fear the Lord, ye his saints! for there is no want to them that fear him." The unbeliever's mistake is, that God's bond cannot be paid, but in giving the very thing itself. Even this is often done, but he also gives his people more frequently what is as good. Moses, wanting meat forty days, had no reason to complain, when God in those days took away his stomach, and satisfied him otherwise than by meat. Adam lived well when the heavens were the roof of his house, and God was his God. All the enjoyment of God still will abundantly compensate the want of all these things.

2. Cleave unto the Lord, turn not aside from him, and thus thou art enriched for eternity, 1 Tim. iv. 8, quoted above. Come death when when it will, what then? thou shalt be carried where thy happiness shall be completed: John xiv. 2, "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you." The law cannot debar thee from this happiness, it is satisfied; justice has nothing to say against thee, for the debt is paid: God is thy God; and the tongue of men, nor of angels, cannot fully express this privilege.

Thirdly, The truth of this weighty point in the text will farther appear, by inspecting the pretended gain which is acquired by turning aside from the Lord.—It may all be summed up in these two particulars.

1. It is nothing; Prov. xxiii. 5, (quoted above). All the gain is but children's gain, which they have won off their fellows, of which grown persons make no account; and as little will a spiritual heart account of gain got by turning aside from the Lord. It is a poor trade where a person is not gaining for his soul; and no person will gain for this by turning aside from God.

2. It is worse than nothing. Whatsoever thou thinkest thou gainest by turning aside from the Lord, a thousand times more is going to destruction in the meantime. Count what thou givest out, as well as what thou gettest in, and thou wilt soon see the gain worse than nothing: Matth. xvi. 26, "For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

From all which it is evident, that no man shall better his condition, but ruin it, by turning aside from the Lord, let him turn to what hand soever he will.—I now proceed,

III. To make some improvement of this subject, in an use of information.—Hence,

1. You who have never yet turned to the Lord, but have been going aside from him all your days, know, that ye are yet in a ruinous condition; there is nothing you can call yours, but what is vanity, and cannot profit or deliver. Ye will not be persuaded of this; but remember it is explicitly told you; and if grace do not open your eyes to see it timely, death will open them to see it when it is out of time to mend the matter.

2. Backsliders, be all of you convinced of the foolish choice ye have made, repent, and turn again unto the Lord. What have you gained by your departures from him? Where is the advantage of the sad exchange? Blasted profits! short-lived pleasures! leaving a sting behind them in the conscience these will not compensate for what ye have lost.

3. Ye who have got near God in this ordinance, ye may see that it is your duty and interest, by a holy tender walk, a living by faith, to hold where you are. If you step aside from God, you may well mar your case, you will never mend it this way. Entertain no curiosity to be on the other side of the hedge; satisfy yourselves that there is nothing there but vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain: Isa. xxx. 7, "For the Egyptian shall help in vain, and to no purpose; therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still."

4. Disappointed communicants may hence be satisfied, that if you love your own souls, it is not for your profit to go aside to another door, to get your loss at the door of God's house made up another way. Your case, it is likely, is sad, and Satan will strike in with the occasion to make you a fair offer. But know of a truth, if you embrace it, instead of mending your condition, you shall make your sad case yet sadder. Be peremptory in your resolutions that you will wait upon the Lord, and not give over, how long soever ye be without sensible success: Gen. xxxii. 26, "And the angel said to Jacob, Let me go, for the day breaketh; and he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." Go thou, and do likewise.

5. Ye carnal ones, who are weary of waiting about the Lord's hand, and are longing to be back to the world as your element, saying in your heart, "When will the Sabbath be over?" Ye may see the propriety of checking these carnal motions: stir up yourselves to seek the Lord, and to improve the present opportunity for making a happy settlement for your souls; otherwise, if you miss such an occasion of mending your condition, ye know not if ever ye shall have it again: and by neglecting it, ye run towards the ruining of your souls.

Let all be exhorted to cleave to the Lord, and tremble at the thought of turning aside from him. Be exhorted, with purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord, Acts xi. 23. Turn not aside from his precious truths, his holy ordinances, the way of holiness and tenderness in the whole of your conversation; but cleave to the Lord, his word, his way, and to whatever bears his stamp. Turn not aside, whatever may be the temptation or allurement. Know of a truth, that it is but poison presented in a golden cup to you, which will work the ruin of your condition; it is but a gilded vanity, to cheat you to cut off a substantial good: it is what will not fail to be bitterness in the end. Have your eyes in your head, then, and forfeit not God's favour or smiles for lying vanities.

Again, turn not aside, whatever be the hazard of holding on. Let devils and men run that as high as they will, as sure as God's word is truth, the greatest hazard is ever on the other side; and they who turn aside run the most fearful risk.—Wherefore, take it home with you, lay it up in your hearts, and improve it in your daily walk; decide all your controversies with temptation, managed by a subtile devil, a carnal heart, or the men of the world, by this,—That you cannot turn aside, but "after vain things, which cannot profit, nor deliver, for they are vain." Amen.

JESUS COMPLETELY QUALIFIED FOR HIS WORK.*

SERMON XLVI.

ISAIAH lxi. 1,

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me.

THIS text is that upon which our Lord Jesus himself preached to the congregation at Nazareth, Luke iv. 16—19. And if we ask of whom the prophet spake, Jesus tells you, ver. 21, that it was of him. Though the prophet perhaps had an eye to himself, and to the promised deliverance from the Babylonish captivity; yet certainly Christ, and the spiritual deliverance by him, is the principal subject. Jesus is here described as the Mediator between God and man. In the words we have two things:—

1. The glorious qualifications of our Mediator: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me." Here are the three persons of the Trinity

* Delivered Sept., 1718.

distinguished. The Lord God, his Son, and his Spirit. Our Lord Jesus being both God and man, the Holy Spirit, with all his gifts, was put on the man Christ. At his baptism the Spirit descended upon him like a dove, Matth. iii. 16. On him also the Spirit rested, and never again departed from him, but continued filling him at all times with graces and gifts for the discharge of his great trust. So that he says the Spirit *is* upon me, not *is come* upon me.—We have,

2. The *reason* of these glorious qualifications. This was, because they were necessary for the office to which he was called: "Because the Lord God hath anointed me." It behoved him to be both God and man. As he was God, he could have nothing added to him; but as he was man, it behoved him to be endowed with unparalleled qualifications for this unparalleled office.—Here consider his call to the work. The Lord anointed him, as prophets, priests, and kings were wont to be, and thus were called and set apart to their respective offices; in like manner was Christ called of the Father to the Meditorial works, not with material oil, as they were, but with the Holy Spirit, which was signified by that oil.—Again, consider his mission: the Lord *sent* him. He did not come unsent to the world; but his Father having called him, and furnished him for the work, sent him away to exercise his commission, and to perform his work.—Consider, next, the work he was called to, and sent out upon. Consider this work with respect to Christ himself; and it is threefold. *First*, As a prophet or preacher of the gospel, revealing the Father's mind. *Secondly*, A priest or healer, a spiritual physician, for sin-sick souls, to bind up the broken-hearted. *Thirdly*, As a king, to issue out proclamations, far more joyful than those of Cyrus to the captives, as the spiritual captivity and imprisonment is far worse than a corporal one.—Consider the work as it respects the different sorts of people with whom he has to deal; and it is twofold. *First*, Some of them have some good in them wrought by his Spirit; and of these, some are the meek, others are broken-hearted. *Secondly*, Some of them have no good in them, they are captives, prisoners to Satan. Both sorts are in his commission, as persons he has to deal with.—Consider this work as it respects the different cases of these sorts of persons; and it is fourfold. 1*st*, To the meek, he has to carry good tidings. 2*dly*, to the broken-hearted, he has to bind up their wounds. 3*dly*, To the captives he has to give deliverance, and 4*thly*, To the prisoners he has to open the prison doors. Thus he is, by the Father's special appointment, to give suitable help to each case. A more particular explication of these things will be given as we advance in the subject.

Now, here is a great work; and because of it, (or, as it is in the

Hebrew, answerable to it), he is endowed with the Spirit, with his graces and gifts, without which he could not be qualified for it.

The subject of our present discourse, is our Lord's qualification for his work: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me." Here our Lord commends himself to poor sinners, that they may come to him, and be happy in him. Who can commend him to purpose but himself? He commends himself to us, from the fulness of the Spirit lodged in him, as in Rev. iii. 1, "And unto the angel of the church of Sardis write, These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars." As when the soul is gone, the body can move and act no more; so where the Spirit of God is gone from men, they can do no more good. While destitute of the Spirit, they are shut up under an uninterrupted barrenness. Now, this is the natural case of the whole world. To the world, then, under the want of the Spirit, Christ here makes public proclamation where the Spirit is to be found; as if he had said, "O all ye spiritless, lifeless sinners, dead to grace and goodness, be it known unto you, "the Spirit of the Lord God is upon me." He says as Joseph said to his brethren, Gen. xlv. 9, and downwards. The Spirit came upon Moses and the prophets, but they could spare none of their oil; if they could, they could not have communicated it. But the Spirit is on *me*, as the oil in the cistern, to be dispersed by the pipes of conveyance to poor sinners who will come to me. This is indeed a proclamation of a well-stored and cheap market, to a country perishing under famine, to which they should all resort.

That this is the true intent of these words, appears *first*, Because it is plain from the original accentuation, that the principal purpose of the text, is not to shew why the Spirit was on Christ, (for in that case the chief stop within the verse had been at broken-hearted), but to shew, that the Spirit *is* on him, (for there the great stop is.) "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me," &c. *Secondly*, Because an amazing change is prophesied, in the preceding chapter, to come upon the church of the Gentiles; and so here follows the accounting for it: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me," to be communicated for effecting this change.

From this part of the subject, I observe the following

DOCTRINE, That the Spirit of God was eminently on Jesus Christ, to be communicated to poor sinners.

This was typified by the ointment poured out on the head of the High Priest, Psalm cxxxiii. 2. Compare John i. 16.

For illustrating this doctrine, we propose,

I. To shew in what eminent sort the Spirit of the Lord was upon Christ the Mediator.

II. To confirm this point, That the Spirit is put upon Christ to be communicated.

III. I will consider the reasonableness and suitableness of this glorious device, of the Spirit's being put on Christ, to be communicated to poor sinners.—And then,

IV. We shall improve the subject.—We are,

I. To shew in what eminent sort the Spirit of the Lord was upon the Mediator.—Here we observe,

1. That the gifts and graces of the Spirit were conferred on Christ's human nature in a singular measure: Psalm xlv. 7, "God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." What these are you may see, Isa. iii. 2, 3. Others have had much of these, but never any so much of them as the man Christ, though they were not infinite, which is a property peculiar to the divine perfections. Thus his enemies were obliged to confess, that he spoke as never man spoke. And in this sense that testimony, John iii. 34, "God giveth not his Spirit by measure unto him," may be applied even to Christ's manhood; namely, that God gives not his gifts and graces to him sparingly, as out of a measure, but with a full hand most abundantly.—We observe,

2. The fulness of the Spirit was upon the Mediator; and that is an infinite fulness, for he is God as well as man: Col. ii. 9, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." The Holy Spirit is an infinite Spirit of boundless perfections, all which Jesus Christ as God doth fully possess. The divine nature, an unfathomable depth of perfections, was united to the human nature in our Mediator; so that he has not only a portion of the Spirit, but the whole fulness of the Spirit, John iii. 34. Saints have, and can have, by their measure; but the ocean of perfections, which knows no bounds, and all grace, were and was in him.—We observe,

3. That the Spirit was at all times alike on that Mediator. The Spirit came sometimes on the prophets, instructing them what to say, and exciting them to say it; but sometimes the spirit of prophecy did not blow, they had it not at their command: 1 Peter i. 21, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." See an instance, 2 Sam. vii. 2—5, where the prophet Nathan knew not how to direct David, till the word of the Lord came to him. So the Spirit of sanctification in the saints, though he never departs from them, yet how often is there a dead calm in their souls, which requires them to say, as in Song iv. 26, "Awake, O north wind! and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his

garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." But the Spirit rested on Jesus Christ, Isa. xi. 2; it dwelleth in him, Col. ii. 9. He never can be at a loss for want of the Spirit, whose waters in him are never shallow, but still continue alike deep. We observe,

4. That the Spirit is upon him in the fulness of a fountain, to be communicated to those who come to him: Zech. xiii. 1, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness:" so "Jesus breathed on his disciples," John xx. 22, and said unto them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." All others, even the saints in heaven, have but the fulness of a vessel, what only may serve themselves. But he has the fulness of a spring, where the waters are ever flowing, and therefore can furnish all others who come to him, and yet have never the less to himself.—We come now,

II. To confirm this point, That the Spirit was in Christ to be communicated.—We observe,

1. That this is plain from scripture-testimony: Rev. iii. 1, "He hath the seven spirits of God." All the saints have the Spirit of God. He dwells in each of them; if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his, Rom. viii. 9. But then this is quite another thing than the simple having of the Spirit. Christ hath the Spirit as he hath the seven stars, that is, at his disposal, to give them or take them from whom he will: Psalm lxvi. 18, "Thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God may dwell among them." Compare Eph. iv. 8. Whence it is plain, that Christ received these gifts, received them to give them to men.—This is plain,

2. For Christ, as Mediator and surety of the new covenant, is a common person, as Adam was in the first covenant, who received the stock of all mankind in his hand, and lost it. Now, free grace has made up the stock again, and put it in a sure hand, where it never can be lost: Psalm lxxxix. 19, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty." He is the second Adam, and therefore the fulness of the Spirit and of his grace is put upon him, to be communicated by him to poor sinners.—Consider farther,

3. That Christ could not have been qualified to execute the office to which the Father had called him, without communicating the Spirit to those with whom he has to deal; therefore says the text, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath sent me to preach good tidings to the meek." How shall the poor meek ones, who see nothing in them or about them to recommend them to God, believe the good tidings, without the Spirit of faith? How can the broken-hearted have their wounds bound up without the

healing spirit? How can the captives and prisoners be delivered, unless the Spirit break off their fetters.—Consider,

Lastly, That it is from Jesus Christ that all who partake of the Spirit do receive the Spirit; there is no other channel of conveyance: John i. 16, "Out of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." John vi. 63, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth: the words that I speak unto you are spirit, and they are life." It is he who sends the Spirit, John xv. 16. It is true, the Father is said to give the Spirit to them that ask him, Luke xi. 13; but it is still in Christ's name, and for his sake, John xiv. 29. Therefore he is called the Spirit of God's Son, whom he sends forth into the hearts of his people.—We now proceed,

III. To consider the reasonableness and suitableness of his glorious device, of the Spirit being put on Christ to be communicated to poor sinners.

1. It is most suitable to the Father's honour, that guilty criminals partake of his Spirit through a Mediator. God looked on all the fallen race of man, and could be pleased with none of them: Psalm xiv. 3, "They are all gone aside; they are altogether become filthy." But behold his own Son became man! and he is well pleased with him, with his person and mediation, and therefore with sinners in him, Matth. iii. 17. In Christ he meets with the sinner; and his justice being satisfied by him, he may, with safety to his own honour, communicate with the poor creatures, and they receive his Spirit, as members of his own Son, their glorious Head.

2. It is most suitable to the honour of the Son, who is appointed head over all things to the church, which is his body, Eph. i. 23. This is that honour which his Father has put upon him, that he be the great steward of heaven, the trustee for all the elect of God, the great dispenser of the Father's favours, to the objects of everlasting love. And as Pharaoh put an honour upon Joseph, by ordering his petitioners to go to Joseph; so does the Father put honour upon Christ, his own well-beloved Son, by a similar appointment.

3. It is most suitable to the honour of the Holy Spirit; for in this manner the gift of the Spirit appears to be by the infinite value of the blood of the Son of God: Rev. v. 6, "The Lamb slain hath seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." No receiving of this holy fire, but from the altar where a Saviour was slain. No communicating of that Spirit, but through the blood of the Redeemer.

Lastly, It is most suitable to the sinner's case; for Christ is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. He is our near kinsman, through whom we come to God boldly: Eph. iii. 12, "In whom we have

boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him." We are not able to behold an unvailed God, his glory would dazzle and confound us; but through the vail of the flesh of Christ we may behold him and live.—We now come,

IV. To a practical improvement of the subject. And this,

First, In a use for information.

1. This lets us see the transcendent glory and beauty of Jesus Christ. Pharaoh could say of Joseph to his servants, Gen. xlviii. 38, "Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?" How does the firmament shine with the stars which sparkle in it! How beautiful is the earth, when decked with the variety of the gifts of nature in the spring! But what are all these to the Mediator's glory and beauty, in whom all the gifts and graces of God's Spirit do centre: Psalm xlv. 2, "Thou art fairer than the sons of men; grace is poured into thy lips." There is no man, however well qualified, that excels in all things, there is a want in every individual, but no want in Christ; Song v. 16, "Yea, he is altogether lovely." (Heb. He is all desires).—We may learn,

2. The absolute fulness and sufficiency of Christ to make the sinner who comes to him perfectly happy; he gives them rest, Matth. xi. 28. There is a fulness of the Spirit in him to answer all their necessities, be what they will. Behold the whole constellation of gifts and graces in our exalted Redeemer. Every good gift, natural, moral, or religious, comes from this Spirit. Some have one gift of him, some another; but our Lord Jesus Christ has all, which is more than all the excellencies to be found in angels and men. And what can he want to bestow, who has the Spirit to give to those who come to him?—We may learn,

3. The freedom of grace in Christ. He has all, and he communicates all freely. The spring runs freely without price or hire. It is a pleasure to have a full breast sucked: and it is a pleasure to our blessed Redeemer to do good and to communicate to undeserving sinners.—We may see,

4. The absolute need we have of Christ. Ye are ruined without the Spirit, ye will pine away in your guilt, rust away in your corruptions, and, like dead corpses, be buried out of God's sight, if ye get not the Spirit; and ye cannot have the Spirit but from Christ. This is the only market opened to relieve your necessities.

Lastly, Ye are inexcuseable if ye continue without the Spirit, for you may have the Spirit if you come to Christ; but, alas! he may say of us, as John v. 40, "Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life." I would raise your dead souls, I would quicken you, I would make you as a well-watered garden: but alas! ye care not

for the Spirit. Prov. i. 25, "Ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof."—We shall improve this subject,

Secondly, In a use of exhortation.

1. I would exhort you, then, to come to Christ, that ye may partake of his Spirit. Christ is saying to you this day, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me." Come, and I will pour him out upon you. Alas for the want of the Spirit this day! it appears sadly in the whole church, in the congregation, in neighbourhoods, and in families. There is enough of a selfish, devilish, carnal, worldly, profane, and formal spirit, but little of a holy heavenly spirit, to be seen this day. But we may get the spirit, if we will by faith come to Christ for it. O that we were moving to him for this spirit!—To be more particular, we would exhort you,

1. Come to Christ, O thou dead and lifeless sinner, who art lying rotting under the power of thy lusts, who hast a heart within thee which cannot repent and mourn, or let go the dead grip it has taken of the world, and of sinful courses. His Spirit is a spirit of life, which will make the dry bones live, the withered soul flourish as an herb, the heart, which is like a clog now in duties, to be like the chariots of Aminadib: Eph. v. 14, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give thee light."

2. Come, drooping, fainting, dispirited soul, who art harassed with terrors, pierced with fearful apprehension, whose heart is like a stone, dying within thee. His Spirit is a spirit of light, life, and comfort: he binds up the broken-hearted, makes light to arise to those who go mourning without the sun, takes off the sackcloth, and girds with gladness.

3. Come, hard-hearted sinner, whom nothing can move, neither judgments nor mercies, who canst not mourn either for thy own sins, or the sins of the generation. His Spirit can soften the heart. He will take away your stony heart, and give you an heart of flesh. An outpouring of the Spirit would melt down the heart, and dissolve it in tears of godly sorrow, this would break the bands of iron and brass: Zech. xii. 10, "And I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son; and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born."

4. Come, tempted sinner, who art harassed with temptations, and art ready to say, One day I shall fall before this great adversary. The Spirit is a spirit of power, 2 Tim i. 7. It may be, that temptations come in on thee like a breaking forth of waters, threatening to

sweep all before them; but come to Christ for his Spirit, who is able to stem the tide, to create peace, and to make thee more than a conqueror.

5. Come, unfruitful sinner. The Lord is at much pains with you by ordinances and providences, yet you are barren! you bring forth no fruit answerable to the pains of the Husbandman. What is the reason the Spirit comes not with the word and providences? But you may have the Spirit from Christ, and this would make you fruitful: Eph. v. 9, "For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth." The blowing of that wind from heaven would make the spices flow out, Cant. iv. 16, and cause you to make progress in your journey to the Zion above.

6. Come, unholy sinner. The Spirit which Christ has to give, is a spirit of holiness, Rom. i. 4. He works like water in washing the polluted soul, like fire in burning up corruption. He is the great principle of holiness, who works it wherever he comes, and makes of the very worst a vessel fit for the Master's use.

Lastly, Come to Christ for his Spirit, whatever your case be; you will find a suitable cure from him, by the fulness of the Spirit in him; he is suited for every case that is put in his hand: Col. ii. 9, 10, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, who is the head of all principalities and powers." He will be eyes to the blind, light to them that sit in darkness, legs to the lame, meat to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, clothing to the naked; all in all.—To prevail with you in coming to Christ for the Spirit, I would offer you the following motives:—

Mot. 1. The Spirit of the Lord is absolutely necessary for you to have, you cannot want him, you must have him. The world may as well want the sun, moon, and stars, as you can want the Spirit; for without the Spirit ye can do nothing but sin. When the soul is away, the body is dead, and can do nothing but lie and rot in a grave: and when the Spirit of God is not in a man, he is dead in sin, and can do nothing but sin: John vi. 63, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you they are spirit, and they are life." Ye cannot have a good and aceptable thought, nor perform any duty acceptable: John iv. 24, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." So that all pains are lost upon thee, as on the dead tree, to which summer and winter are alike.—Again, without the Spirit, ye are none of Christ's, Rom. viii. 9, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." All those who are Christ's, they are sealed and marked with the Spirit of Christ: Eph. i. 13, "In

whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." Men set their mark on their sheep, and therefore says one, If such a one be one of my sheep, it has such a mark; so says our Lord, If one of my sheep, he has my Spirit in him; and so without the Spirit, without Christ, and without the Father, therefore without the Spirit, without God in the world.—Farther, without the Spirit, ye are undone for ever: for so ye are without God, and therefore without hope, Eph. ii. 12. The dead corpse may be kept a while, but when there is no hope of the return of life, it is buried in a grave; so, without the Spirit, ye may be kept a while through God's patience, but the end will be, to be cast into the pit, and buried out of God's sight in fiery flames.

Mot. 2. You cannot have the Spirit but from Jesus Christ. The blessed Mediator is the bowl from which this holy oil is conveyed to all the lamps which burn with it. The Spirit, says he, is on *me:* 1 John ii. 20, "But ye have an unction from the *holy One*, and ye know all things." Ver. 27, "But the anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you." The Egyptians must have starved, if they had not been supplied with corn by Joseph, for he had all the corn at his disposal; and we must be for ever without the Spirit, if we receive him not from Christ. The Spirit dwells in none but as members of Christ: and whence shall the members have life but from the Head?

Mot. 3. Ye may have the Spirit, and that freely, from Christ: Prov. i. 23, "Turn ye at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you." And the promise is very bountiful, ye may have all free of cost: Rev. xxii. 17, "And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The Spirit on Christ is that water of life which gives life to the dead, and life more abundantly to the living; and the terms are, Ask of him, and he will give thee living water, John iv. 10. Not only drops of the Spirit, but the Spirit poured out, floods of the same: Isa. xliv. 3, "For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." John vii. 38, 39, "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified)."

Lastly, By way of motive, if ye will not come to Christ for the Spirit, ye judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, ye are slighters of Christ, and dreadful will your reckoning be: Prov. i. 24—27, "Because I have called, and ye have refused: I have stretched out

my hand, and no man regarded. But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof. I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you." It will be more tolerable for those who never heard where they might partake of the Spirit than for you.

In conclusion, I shall only add the following directions:—

1. Pray earnestly for the Spirit, in the name of Christ; you have a promise of the Spirit; says God, by the prophet Ezekiel, "And I will put my spirit within you." And said Jesus, "If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more should your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Take courage, then, believe the promise, press it and depend upon it.

2. Unite with Jesus Christ, accepting him in the gospel-offer, and giving yourselves away freely to him. Bring your dead soul to the Lord of life, and he will breathe in it, and ye shall be like the dead man laid in the sepulchre of Elisha, who revived, and stood upon his feet, whenever he touched the prophet's bones, 2 Kings xiii. 21.

Lastly, Wait and look for the Spirit in Christ's ordinances, especially the preaching of the gospel. They who would have the wind to blow on them, go out into the open air; though they may for the present miss it, they wait till it blows, when in like manner exercised, then you shall know that the ministration of the Spirit is glorious, 2 Cor. iii. 8. Amen.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

SERMON XLVII.

ISAIAH lxi. 1,

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me.

UNDER this part of the text, we propose to consider the necessity of the fulness of the Spirit being lodged in Christ. It was necessary, because the Lord hath anointed him unto, and sent him forth upon the mediatory work. The greatness of that work required it.—Here I observe the following doctrines:—

DOCTRINE I. That our Lord Jesus Christ was by the Father anointed to, and sent forth upon, the mediatory work.—Or, in other words,

That our Mediator, the Lord Jesus, was anointed by the Father unto this office, and sent forth by him to this work.

DOCTRINE II. That the work upon which Jesus the Mediator was sent forth, necessarily required the fulness of the Spirit to be lodged in him.—We begin with

DOCTRINE I. That our Lord Jesus Christ was by the Father anointed to, and sent forth upon, the mediatory work.—Or, in other words,

That our Mediator, the Lord Jesus, was anointed by the Father unto this office, and sent forth by him to this work,—In illustrating this doctrine, I shall,

1. Consider the anointing here mentioned.

II. Speak of the sending which flowed from and followed upon it.

III. Make some practical improvement.

I. I am to consider the anointing here mentioned. In attending to this I shall, *first*, shew what is meant by this anointing. *Secondly*, Wherewith Christ was anointed.

First, We are to shew what is meant by this anointing. Under the Old Testament, anointing was a ceremony used for consecrating kings, priests, and prophets: thus David was anointed king, Aaron was anointed priest, Elisha anointed a prophet. This ceremony signified two things:—The designation of the person to the office. It being a sign, by the divine appointment, that this was the person whom God had called to this work; it was also a discovery of the divine purpose, as thereby the person was consecrated to the office; though sometimes it was long after that he got his orders to proceed to the actual exercise of it. Thus Samuel, by the command of the Lord, anointed David king long before he assumed the government, 1 Sam. xvi. 13—Again, this ceremony also signified the endowment of the person with the abilities and qualifications necessary to fit him for the work. Thus, when Saul was anointed king, God gave him another heart, 1 Sam. x. 13, "And when David was anointed king, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him from that day forward," 1 Sam. xvi. 13. Accordingly, Christ's anointing signifies two things:—

1. His designation to the mediatory office. The Father pitched upon his Son, and set him apart for this grand work, to recover a ruined world. He made choice of him to be the repairer of the great breach, and put the breach under his hand. Hence he is called God's elect or chosen one; Isa. xlii. 1, "Behold (says God)

my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth." Christ's anointing signifies,

2. His being fitted and furnished for that office to which he was designed and set apart: John iii. 31, "For he whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God, for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. Hence it is said of him, that he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." It was an unparalleled work, and so unparalleled qualifications were necessary for it. He was pitched upon to be the Father's servant in the great work of recovering an elect world. He was infinitely wise who made the choice, and therefore could not but pitch on a suitable person: he was also infinitely powerful, and all-sufficient, and therefore could fully qualify him for it. We have both the choice and the furniture together: Isa. xlii. 1, "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." And this is the import of the anointing.—But let us view it more particularly,

In the designation or choice made by the Father. Infinite wisdom appeared in it most conspicuously, with infinite love to an elect world. When the divine decree and purpose of man's redemption was laid down by the Trinity, the great thing next to be considered was, who should undertake the work, and be the Redeemer. No mere man could be chosen, for none could have a back to bear such a burden. All were guilty, and could not satisfy for their own sin, far less purchase salvation for others. No angel could be chosen, for even they, with their stock, could not have been able to have discharged the debt, in regard it was infinite; wherefore the Father made choice of his own Son, as a person who could undertake it; Psalm lxxxix. 19, 20, "Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people; I have found David my servant, and with my holy oil have I anointed him." He being the Son of God, it doubtless became the divine perfections to pitch on him, as one who was to purchase for us the adoption of sons, and to bring many children to glory.—Let us view this anointing,

In qualifying him for the work, in which the same love and wisdom appears. Our Mediator had to die, for without shedding of blood, there could be no remission of sin." The divine nature was not capable of dying, therefore he prepared him a body: Heb. x. 5, "Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body thou hast prepared me." The same nature which sinned had to suffer; therefore he did not create

him a body out of nothing, but prepared him one of the seed of Adam. He was chosen out of the people: Gal. iv. 4, "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." But farther, our nature was corrupted, and our flesh sinful flesh; therefore it could not be immediately united to the divine nature; wherefore he sanctified the substance of which that precious body was formed, and made him a holy human nature: Heb. vii. 26, "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." While what the human nature could do or suffer, would not have possessed sufficient virtue, if separated from the divine; therefore he unites it with it, John i. 14, "And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." And hence the human nature was filled with all gifts and graces necessary to it, for that part which it was to act in the great work. —Let us now,

Secondly, Inquire wherewith Christ was anointed. Not with material oil, but with the Spirit, signified by it: Psalm xlv. 7, "God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness, above thy fellows." And while the designation of the person was from eternity, the Spirit's descending on him like a dove at his baptism was the discovery of that eternal choice, and served for the visible designation of him to the world: Matth. iii. 16, 17, "And Jesus, when he was baptised, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo! the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and, lo! a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." And by the same Spirit it was that he was qualified and fitted for the mediatory work, his holy human nature being with it. —If it be inquired, how his having been anointed can be the reason of the Spirit's being upon him, when the Spirit was that with which he was anointed? I answer, That Christ's having been anointed with the Spirit to qualify him for the mediatory work, is a very proper reason why the Spirit was lodged and continues to be in Christ, to be communicated from him to the members of his mystical body.

II. We are now shortly to speak of the sending of Christ by the Father. As he anointed, so he sent him. This means the Father's calling him out unto the exercise of his office for which he had been designed, and for which he had been qualified. He was seasonably sent to the work by the Father, and he willingly came and put hand to it, for his Father's glory, and the salvation of poor sinners: Psalm xl. 87, "Then said he, Lo I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God! Yea, thy law is within my heart." We may observe three periods of this sending.

The *first* period was at Adam's fall, when all mankind was newly ruined by the first sin; then the Mediator came and looked on the ruins of the world, Gen. iii. 8; preached deliverance to the captives, ver. 15, telling them that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent. He healed the broken-hearted, by covering Adam and his wife with coats of skin, ver. 21, even the skins of sacrifices, a type of the righteousness of a slain Redeemer. Thus he underpropped the world by his mediation, when all was shaken loose by man's disobedience. He began immediately to repair the breach, and kept the world from absolute and irreparable ruin.

The *second* period was at his birth, in the fulness of time, when he became man, being born of the virgin: Gal. iv. 4, "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." The world was then in a deplorable condition; the knowledge of the true God was lost among the Gentiles, religion was corrupted among the Jews, some few were groaning for the consolation of Israel. Then he came in the flesh, being born of a mean woman, and laid in a manger; but at his birth the angels sung, as in Luke ii. 14, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men."

The *third* period was when he entered on the public exercise of his ministry at his baptism; then was he, in a special manner, sent out on that work to which he was called: Matth. iii. 17, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matth. iv. 17, "From that time, Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." Then he went about his work, preaching the gospel, to bring sinners to God; he also became obedient unto the death, according to the everlasting covenant between him and his Father.

III. We now proceed to make some practical improvement.

1*st*, In a use of information.

1. This subject informs us, that the salvation of sinners was the concern of a whole Trinity. How great a work must it be, when the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, each acted their part for bringing it about. The Father sent the Son, the Son submitted to be sent as Mediator, and by the Holy Spirit he was fitted for the work. Never, then, think little of that salvation, which required such causes and authors to bring it about.—It informs us,

2. That Jesus Christ is perfectly able to save sinners: Heb. vii. 25, "He is able to save to the uttermost." He was the Father's choice to that great work, which may assure us he was an able hand for it. He has all given him to fit him for it, which the fulness of the Godhead affords. The Father had never taken him cautioner, if

he had not been perfectly able to pay the debt. He had never laid the sinner's help upon him, if he had not been able to bear the weight of it.

3. See here the manifold wisdom of God, how it is displayed in the contrivance of salvation through Christ. The first creation was a work of wisdom; but the second was more so; the confused heap at first was little in comparison of the confusion sin brought into the world, but divine wisdom brought order out of this confusion. Truth meets with mercy, righteousness and peace embrace each other, sin is punished, and the sinner spared. Out of the greatest affront to God, rises the occasion of his greatest glory, his Son's obedience instead of theirs. When at the fall hell rejoiced, angels stood astonished, and men lay groveling in the depth of misery, wisdom found out a way of recovery, to the marring of the devil's joy, the dissipating man's fears, and giving angels a mystery of wisdom to pry into: Eph. iii. 10, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Jesus Christ our Lord."

4. See here the amazing mercy of God to objects in the deepest misery. To have given rebel sinners some years' respite from their due punishment, to have locked them up in hell, to be released after some millions of years, would have glorified mercy; but for an offended God to provide a Mediator himself, proclaims the height and depth of infinite mercy.

5. See here the love of God to poor sinners. The love of the Father is wonderful, in sending his own Son to recover sinners by his obedience and death: John iii. 16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his Son, his only-begotten Son, unto the death, the most bitter death, even the death of the cross."—The love of Christ, which undertook that heavy work for poor sinners. Here is love admirable in all its dimensions: Christ coming in the room of sinners. If ye doubt his love, look into his pierced side, and behold its glowings there.—The love of the Spirit dwelling in Christ, as the Head, to enliven poor sinners as his members, being in him, exciting, moving him forward to the work, and fitting him for it.—I shall only add a use of exhortation.

O! sirs, let Christ be your choice, as he was the Father's. His Father is well pleased with him, be you also well pleased with him. Employ him in your every case, put all your cases in his hand, lay your help where the Father hath laid it. Receive him whom the Father hath sent, receive him for all the ends to which the Father hath anointed and sent him. He is called Messiah, and Christ,

to denote his being anointed as the Prophet, Priest, and King of his people; he was anointed for all these offices, receive and improve him in them all. He is anointed as the great Prophet, to declare the mind of God to sinners: Isa. lxi. 1, He is to "preach good tidings to the meek." Receive him for your Prophet, and teacher; renouncing your own wisdom, submit yourselves to be taught by his word and Spirit; and go to him for direction in all cases. He is an anointed Priest: Psalm cx. 4, "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Receive him as your Priest, laying the weight of your souls on his sacrifice and intercession; renouncing all confidence in yourselves. Carry your guilt to him, to be carried off by his atonement, and put all your spiritual sacrifices in his hand, for only out of his hand will they be accepted. He is anointed King: Psalm ii. 6, "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." Submit yourselves a willing people to the royal Mediator to receive his commandments, to live according to his laws, to pursue the interest of his kingdom in the world, and to fight under his banner against the devil, the world, and the flesh; since for these ends he is sent, and has come, it lies on us to receive him as such. And that this may have weight with you, consider,

(1.) Who sent him; the Father, the first person of the glorious Trinity: John v. 37, "The Father himself," said he, "that hath sent me, hath borne witness of me." And will we not welcome him whom the Father hath sent, and entertain him for the ends for which he is sent? The Father had a concern for the salvation of lost sinners, and hath sent them a deliverer, a Saviour. How will you answer if you slight him?—Consider,

(2.) Who is sent. The Father hath put an honour on man, beyond what he hath put on angels, in that he sent a Saviour for the one, not for the other. Had he sent a lower person, an angel, with what profound respect ought we to have received him as the messenger of the Lord? how much more when he hath sent his own Son?—Consider,

(3.) The errand and design on which he was sent; namely, to recover a lost world, to make up the peace between God and sinners: Luke xix. 10, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." O! may not his errand make him a welcome messenger to the world? If we will not receive him on this errand, we are self-destroyers a second time, who having first given ourselves a dreadful wound, in the next place reject the Saviour, the Physician sent to us.—Consider,

(4.) The work he was sent upon for this end; doing-work, suffer-

ing-work. His doing-work we have in our text, it will be pleasing and acceptable to sensible sinners. His suffering-work was hard work, but was a necessary foundation for the other. He preached good tidings, but he brought them from his own death. He bindeth up the broken-hearted, but the healing medicine is his own blood; he proclaims deliverance, but the ransom was his own life.—Consider,

(5.) Whence and whither he was sent; from the Father's bosom to this earth, where he was entertained with all evil treatment, till they nailed him to a cross, and he was buried in a grave, Phil. ii. 6—8. He was sent from the regions of bliss to this lower world, and refused not the journey; he was sent from the hallelujahs of angels, to endure the contradiction of sinners against himself. And when he is come, will we not receive him?

Lastly, Consider the necessity of this mission: Psalm xl. 6, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened; burnt-offerings and sin-offerings hast thou not required; then said I, Lo! I come." The world had universally perished without remedy if he had not come. He bare up the pillars thereof, and warded off the blow of justice, by laying his own neck on the block. And now that he is come, he must be embraced and improved, else we perish; for, Acts iv. 12, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." There is no other salvation to look to: Heb. ii. 3, "How then shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"—I shall now go on to illustrate very briefly,

Doctrine II. That the work upon which the Mediator was sent forth, necessarily required the fulness of the Spirit to be lodged in him.

In illustrating this, all that I intend is, to confirm the point briefly, and then conclude with a very short improvement.

To confirm this point, we need do no more but give a short account of Christ's mediatory work.

1. Christ is the day's-man betwixt God and sinners. He was employed to take cognisance of the difference between the two parties, to decide who it was had done the wrong, and on what terms they might be reconciled. Hence we read, John v. 22, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." He has framed the covenant of reconciliation, as Mediator between the parties: Song iii. 9, "King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon." In him is found what Job so much desired, Job ix. 33, "a day's-man to lay his hands upon both:" namely, to keep the dissenting parties asunder, lest they should

fall foul of one another. This the Mediator had to do; this he did when he timeously stept in betwixt an offended God and guilty sinners, like the ram caught in the thicket, when Isaac was lying bound on the altar, which stopped the execution, and held the hand of justice, Psalm vi. 7, (quoted above).—He is a day's-man, to keep them together, lest they should quite separate, and the reconciliation of the parties blow up. Thus Christ deals with sinners, who otherwise would run away from God, and never come in terms with him. Thus he did with our first parents, whom he brought out of their hiding-place, to set matters on a new footing.

2. He is the Messenger that goes betwixt the parties, intimating the mind of the one to the other, in order to make reconciliation. And in the respect Moses was a typical mediator: Deut. v. 5, "I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to shew you the word of the Lord: for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount." So Christ is called the Messenger of the covenant, Mal. iii. 1. He brings the Lord's mind to poor sinners, unfolds the thoughts of love which were from eternity in his breast: John i. 18, "No man hath seen God at any time, the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Thus he brings down the covenant out of the register of heaven, and proclaims it to rebels: and if there be any among them content to come into it, and who accept of it, he reports their acceptance to his Father: John xvii. 8, "For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest unto me, and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee; and they have believed that thou didst send me."

3. He is a Surety betwixt the parties, and therefore is called the surety of a better testament, Heb. vii. 22; engaging and taking burden upon him on their behalf, that so the peace may be firm and lasting.—Christ the Mediator, is surety for man to God. In the first covenant, man had no surety for himself; and there needed none. He was able to do all that was required of him; for he was in good case, there was no flaw in his estate; but in his fallen state, God would not take his word, nor his most solemn engagement; it behoved him to have a surety to undertake for him, and that both by way of satisfaction and caution. Man was broken, was drowned in debt which he never would be able to pay, and so he needed a surety to make satisfaction, who should be able and would engage himself to pay the debt. Christ the Mediator then became surety for the broken man, undertook to pay all his debt, gave in his bond for it in the covenant of redemption, which the Father accepted: Psalm lxxxix. 19, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty;"

he engaged body for body, life for life, like Judah for Benjaman, Gen. xliii. 9, in the fulness of time he paid the debt, and got up the discharge at his own resurrection from the dead. Man was false and fickle, and not to be trusted; so needed a cautioner who would bind for his good behaviour. Christ became cautioner for the poor prodigals, engaging himself that they shall consent to the covenant: John vi. 37, "All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me: and him that cometh to me, I will in nowise cast out." And that having consented, they shall hold by it, and never fall away totally and finally: John x. 28, "And I will give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand." By his Spirit of faith and holiness, which he puts in them, he accordingly secures them.—He is also surety for God to man. He undertook that God's part of the covenant shall be punctually fulfilled to us: 2 Cor. i. 20, "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, to the glory of God by us." It is true, the infinite veracity and power of the principal leaves no need of a surety, in respect of himself; but poor guilty sinners, sensible of their own unworthiness, are timorous, misbelieving, distrustful creatures; and therefore, that they may be helped to believe, there is a surety of their own nature, even the man Christ Jesus, granted unto them. That all the promises of God in the covenant shall be fulfilled to those who come into it, he has completely ensured. He has given his cautionary word: John v. 24, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life." He hath given his Spirit as an earnest and seal of the promise, Eph. i. 13, "In whom also, after ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." He has given them the first-fruits of the Spirit in themselves, Rom. viii. 23. He has also given them the sacrament. He has gone to deal with it, saying, "This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins," Matth. xxvi. 28.

4. He is an intercessor betwixt the parties: Isa. liii. 12, "He makes intercession for the transgressors." He, by his interest, manages betwixt the Lord and poor sinners, to set matters right, and keep them so. This is that which relates to the application of his redemption, and puts life in the Mediator's death, that it may be efficacious to his chosen ones. As the high priest appeared in the holy of holies, presenting the blood of the sacrifice to the Lord; so does Christ appear in heaven to intercede for those for whom he has

died. And he intercedes,—as a peace-maker, who actually makes peace betwixt God and every believing sinner; hence, Heb. xii. 24, he is "Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant;" and his blood is "the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." By his means, he who was before an enemy is reconciled to God, brought within the bond of the covenant of peace, and gets a right to all the benefits of it. As by his gracious Spirit he extinguishes the real enmity of the sinner against God, so by his intercession he removes the legal enmity in God against the sinner.—He intercedes as the Secretary, or favourite courtier of heaven, bringing in the sinner into the comfortable gracious presence of God, procuring him access to God, and communion with him in duties: Eph. iii. 12, "In whom we have boldness and access, with confidence, by the faith of him." Thus, through the vail of his flesh, the believing sinner draws nigh to God, and God draws nigh to him with his quickening, sanctifying, and comforting influences. The sinner looks on God with the confidence a child does on a father.—He intercedes as a resident at the court of heaven: Heb. ix. 24, "He is entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." And by this means he maintains that peace which he has made betwixt God and believers: Rom. v. 1, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ:" he keeps the believer's trade with heaven open and free for them: Rom. v. 2, "By whom also we have access by faith, into this grace, wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." He removes any emergent differences, Isa. liii. 12; and so ensures, by the covenant of peace, that there can never be a total rupture betwixt heaven and them: Heb. vii. 25, "Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."—He intercedes as an Advocate at the bar of God: 1 John ii. 1, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." He pleads their cause before God, upon the ground of his own sufferings, against all their accusers and whatever is charged upon them, so that they are freed from condemnation, their right and title to heaven is still vindicated, notwithstanding their many failures; and wrath can go no farther against them than temporary strokes.—He intercedes as a Solicitor for his people before the Lord. He presents their petitions, and solicits for the granting of them. With much incense he offers the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne, Rev. viii. 3. They have many wants, both as to temporal and spiritual things. They must go to God for them, and put up their petitions. But he must present them, else they cannot be heard.

5. He is the Administrator of the covenant, God's deputy-governor, to dispose of the benefits of the covenant, and to manage the whole matter betwixt the Lord and sinners: Matth. xxviii. 18, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." As Joseph was set over the land of Egypt, so he is set over his Father's house, all commerce betwixt the Lord and sinners being through his mediation. As they can offer nothing to God acceptably, but through him: so they can receive no benefit from heaven but through his hand: John v. 22, "For the Father judgeth no man, but committed all judgment unto the Son." He has to bring the elect to consent to the covenant; to rule and govern them in it; to protect, provide, and furnish them with all necessaries through the wilderness: and, finally, to give them the crown and kingdom at last; this is the office and work to which Christ was anointed; neither men nor angels could be fit for such a trust. Could any manage it without a fulness of the Spirit lodged in him? therefore, as in John v. 22, (quoted above), and in ver. 23, "All men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father: he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father that sent him." All men should honour the Son, for none but one who had the fulness of the divine perfections could be capable of such a trust. Who else was fit to be day's-man between God and sinners? Who else could be the messenger of the covenant, for who hath known the mind of the Lord, but his only-begotten and well-beloved Son, who from eternity lay in his bosom?

I conclude with a very short improvement.

1. Learn hence, that the work of the salvation of sinners, restoring them to the favour of God, and to make them happy, is a great work, and a work which was not easily accomplished. It was a work above the power of men or angels, a work not to be performed but by him who has all power in heaven and earth. Think on this ye that judge it such an easy thing to obtain mercy; and assure thyself it is a work which can never be done but by Christ's own hand.

2. Highly esteem and honour Christ, particularly by believing in him, who is thus qualified for this great work. O what need of the fulness of the Spirit in him to support him under the load of the elect's debt,—in order to the discharging of it,—and to touch and turn the hearts of sinners unto God!

Lastly, See your absolute need of Christ. You must have an interest in him, else you cannot be saved. His mediation only can save you from the wrath of God, and from the lowest hell. Amen.

JESUS A PREACHER OF GOOD TIDINGS TO THE MEEK.

SERMON XLVIII.

Isiah lxi. 1,

The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek.

In these and the following words, we have represented the great, the important work for which Jesus was appointed, and to which he was specially called by his heavenly Father,—work for which he was completely qualified, by the Spirit of the Lord God being upon him. We propose to consider the several parts of this work, in that order in which they are set before us; and accordingly begin with that part, his having "to preach good tidings to the meek."—In which words we have,

1. The work itself in which the Son of God was employed, and to which he was called: "To preach good tidings." He was a minister by office; Rom. xv. 8, "Now I say, that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision, for the truth of God, to confirm the promises of God made to the fathers;" the great minister of the gospel. He was the best among men; he brought good tidings, the best of tidings; by these tidings is meant the gospel, Luke iv. 18. This is the good news, the tidings of peace and salvation, which Jesus brought from heaven to earth.—We have,

2. The special object of this part of the work, "the meek." The word signifies, such as are meek, humble, and submissive, being made so by poverty and affliction. In the parallel place, it reads poor, and the one explains the other. If it is inquired, what poor ones are meant? I think it is plain, it is not those who are mean in the world, but poor in spirit, for these poor ones are meek. These meek ones are classed with the broken-hearted, and both distinguished from the captives and prisoners, by the original accentuation. So that by the meek here is meant, the poor in spirit, those who, as being convinced by the law, have seen themselves to be poor, that they have nothing in which they could stand before God as righteous, but look on themselves as wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, Rev. iii. 17. And it is remarkable, that our Saviour's sermon on the mount begins with good tidings to such persons: Matth. v. 3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

But here there occurs a question: Was Christ to preach the good tidings of the gospel to none but these? To this I answer, The gospel was in itself good tidings unto all: Luke ii. 10, "And the angel

said unto them, Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Our Lord preached to all who heard him promiscuously these good tidings, but in effect they were not good to any but to the poor in spirit among them. None but these could relish the goodness of them; to others they were tasteless, but to the poor in spirit, they sunk like a refreshing oil into their bones.—From these words I take the following

DOCTRINE, That as the tidings of the gospel will indeed be good and welcome tidings to those who are meek, and poor in spirit, so Jesus is, by his heavenly Father, employed on the great work of preaching the good tidings of the gospel to sinners, especially to such who are meek, and spiritually poor in their own eyes.—In handling this doctrine we propose,

I. To consider this meekness and poverty, and shew who are these meek poor ones.

II. To explain the good tidings of the gospel, and, as we go along, shew that they are good and welcome tidings to such persons.

III. Shew how this great work of preaching is, and hath been performed by Christ.

IV. Give the reasons of the doctrine.

V. Make some practical improvement of the whole.—We are then,

1. To consider this meekness and poverty, and shew who are these meek poor ones.—As to this, we observe, that this meekness comprehends in it,

1. A pressing scene of utter emptiness in one's self: Rom. viii. 18, "For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." A poor man going abroad, sees this and the other thing, in the houses of the rich; but when he comes home, he sees none of them there. Thus, the meek poor soul looks through himself, and there, in himself, he sees nothing but emptiness of all goodness, no holiness, wisdom, nor strength. The heart, which should be the garden of the Lord, appears as a bare muir, a wild, a waste. He is ready to cry out, O barren, dry, sapless heart and nature of mine! Agur looks for knowledge, and he says, Prov. xxx. 2, 3, "Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy." The prodigal looks to his provisions, and says, "How many hired servants of my father have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger?" Paul reckons up his whole self, and the sum total is nought: 2 Cor. xii. 11, "For in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing."—This meekness comprehends,

2. A pressing sense of sinfulness: Rom. vii. 14, "We know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin." He looks to the whole of himself, and he sees nothing on him but rags; a sinful nature, a corrupt heart, unclean lusts, and an unholy life. He must rank his righteousness with his unrighteousness, his duties with his sins, for he is defiled with them all: Isa. lxiv. 6, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." These meek poor ones see themselves the very picture of rank poverty, having only filthy rags, death painted on their face by want, and overgrown by the vermin of filthy lusts. They see themselves not only nothing, but worse than nothing, while they look over these frightful accounts of the debt of sin, which stand against them, and for which they have nothing to pay. —This meekness comprehends,

3. A pressing sense of misery by sin. Like the prodigal, they see themselves ready to perish with hunger. Debt is a heavy burden to an honest heart, and filthiness to one that desires to be clean: Rom. vii. 24, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" They look about them, and see themselves in a cloud of miseries, arising from their sins. Their poverty presseth them down. They are obliged to do many things which otherwise they would not, and cannot attain to other things which they desire to arrive at: Rom. vii. 19, "For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do." It separates them from that communion with God which they would otherwise enjoy, makes them sit within, mourning without the sun, when otherwise they might walk abroad in the light of the Lord's countenance. This presseth their souls to the dust.—It comprehends,

4. A sense of utter inability to help one's self: 2 Cor. iii. 5, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves." They see themselves in the mire, but unable to help themselves out; therefore these poor men cry unto the Lord: Psalm xxxiv. 6. They see an emptiness and weakness in all their external privileges, their gifts, duties, yea, their graces, to save and help them. They count all things but loss for Christ, and wish to be found in Christ, not having on their own righteousness, which is of the law. They find the sting in their conscience, but cannot draw it out; guilt is a burden, but they cannot throw it off; lusts are strong and uneasy, but they are not able to master them; and this presses them sore.— This meekness comprehends,

5. A sense of the absolute need of a Saviour, and of help from heaven: 2 Cor. iii. 5, "But our sufficiency is of God." The pride of

the spirit is beat down, they lie down at the Lord's feet, saying, (Jer. xxxi. 18,) "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God." They see they will be ruined if their help come not from above. Their case appears desperate to all remedies, but those which are under the management of an eternal omnipotent hand. They say to their souls, as the king of Israel said to the woman in the time of famine, "If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee?"—It comprehends,

6. A sense as to utter unworthiness of the Lord's help; they see nothing which they have to recommend them to the Lord's help. They dare not stand upon worth, like those proud beggars, who value themselves, on what they have been or done. Like the centurion, they say, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof." Hence there is a word put in for them, Isa. lv. 1, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the water, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." They own the Lord would be just, if he should never vouchsafe his mercy and grace to them, but exclude them for ever from his presence; Jer. iii. 22, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." They see a loathsomeness in the best things about them, in their reformation, mourning, their desires of Christ, wrestling, and prayers for mercy; so that they conclude, if ever he notice them, it must be altogether for his own name's sake.—This meekness comprehends,

7. An earnest desire as to the supply of soul-wants: Matth. v. 6, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." A greedy man, we say, is always poor, because natural poverty consists rather in the desire of what we want, than in the want itself. There are many who want spiritual good things, yet are not poor in Spirit, because they are not pained with the want of them. But the poor in spirit are pained with the want of spiritual good things. They pant for them, Psalm xlii. 1; long for them, thirst for them, Psalm lxiii. 1. Hence we read of the expectation of the poor, which shall not perish for ever, Psalm ix. 18.—It comprehends,

Lastly, A hearty contentment in submitting to any method of help which the Lord will prescribe: Acts ix. 7, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Beggars must not be choosers; these meek poor ones are content with Christ on any terms, while others stand contending about them. Necessity has no law, and hunger will break through stone walls. Whoso are thus situated, will be for a

Saviour, a righteousness, and holiness, at any rate. They are content to be taught, content to be managed: Psalm xxv. 9, "The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way." They are content to part with all, for the enriching pearl of great price.—We are now,

II. To explain the good tidings of the gospel, and, as we go along, shew that they are good and welcome tidings to such persons.

The poor in spirit are wounded by the law: the gospel brings a healing medicine to these wounds. It suits their case fully, and declares to them the good news of a salve for all their sores. Solomon tells us, Prov. xxv. 25, "As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country." Applicable this to nothing so much as the good tidings brought us from heaven in the gospel. I cannot enumerate all the articles of these good tidings, but shall take notice of the following:—

1. The gospel-tidings are tidings of a complete salvation. And are not these good tidings? Luke ii. 11, "For unto us is born a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." O! lost sinners, there is a salvation purchased for you, a great, a complete salvation, a salvation from sin, Matth. i. 21, and from the wrath of God, John iii. 16. It is offered to you, and offered freely, though it was dear bought; it is offered without money and without price, Isa. lv. 1. If ye ask what ye shall do to be saved?—Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and ye shall be saved. Though you are lost, though you have destroyed yourselves, yet here is help for you. Though ye are insensible sinners, the tidings are to you; it will in particular be good and welcome tidings to the meek poor ones, who see their lost and undone condition. A Saviour will be as welcome a sight to them, as a rope cast out from the shore will be to a drowning man. They will eagerly embrace the Saviour and his salvation: Song i. 3, "Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth: therefore do the virgins love thee."—These tidings relate,

2. To a redemption, to a ransom paid: Gal. iii. 13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Sin and Satan made war upon the world, and overcame them all in Adam; so that by nature we are captives and slaves. No more God's free men, nor our own men, but slaves; and the rattling of the chains of divers lusts upon us are evidences of it. But good tidings, O captives! the King's Son, out of his princely bounty, has purchased for you redemption, he has paid a complete ransom, even his own blood: and whosoever will, may come to him. Your freedom is bought; come, take the benefit of it, by following him out of the

land of your captivity; Zech. ix. 11, 12, "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein there is no water; turn ye to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope." But what avails this to those who account it a kind captivity, who love their master, and his drudgery work? they will not come to Jesus. But never were the tidings of a ransom so welcome to a slave in Turkey, as these were to meek poor ones, who are groaning under their bondage, and breathing for the liberty of the sons of God.—These tidings relate,

3. To an indemnity, a pardon to criminals who will come to Jesus: Acts xiii. 38, 39, "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." The world of mankind, God's natural subjects, have joined his grand enemy, and risen up in rebellion against their sovereign Lord. The law has proclaimed us all traitors, justice demands vengeance on the criminals, and we cannot escape by flight or by might. But good tidings, O criminals! the glorious Mediator has got an act of grace, of indemnity and pardon, passed in the court of heaven, in favour of a ruined world, bearing, that whosoever will come in, and lay down their arms, shall have a full and free pardon, written, for the better security, in the blood of the Mediator. It is proclaimed to you, Isa. lv. 7, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God for he will abundantly pardon." In this indemnity, there are no exceptions: Isa. i. 18, "Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red as crimson, they shall be as wool." Now, whatever this be to others, it will be welcome tidings to the meek poor ones, whose consciences are galled with the sting of sin, bowing down under a sense of guilt. Never was a pardon more welcome to a malefactor on the scaffold, than this will be to them: Isa. xxxiii. 24, "And the inhabitants shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquities."—These tidings relate,

4. To a glorious physician of souls, who never misses to cure his patients: Matth. ix. 12, 13, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." That forbidden fruit which was eaten by our first parents, has entailed dreadful diseases on all their posterity; so that this world is no better than an hospital, where there is not one sound person; and the sickness is unto death. But good tidings, O sin-sick soul! There is a glorious physician come from hea-

ven, who will cure all who will come to be cured by him. He cures infallibly, his blood cleanseth from all sin. He cures freely: Hos. xiv. 4, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely. "He rejects no patients: John vi. 37, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." The medicine of his blood and Spirit removes all diseases. What is thy disease? It is a stony heart? He takes it away and gives an heart of flesh. Is it blindness, deafness, dumbness, lameness? He makes the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, and the lame to walk. Is it the falling evil of backsliding? the consumption or decay of grace? the running issue of predominant lusts? the fever of raging lusts? the universal leprosy of the corruption of nature? All these he can cure, for he healeth all manner of diseases. They who see not their diseases, will indeed slight him; but it will be good tidings to the meek poor ones, who are groaning under their diseases. O! then will such an one say, I will take my stony heart to him, my blindness to him, &c.—These tidings are the tidings,

5. Of a feast: Isa. xxv. 6, "And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees, well refined." Since man has left God, he has had nothing to feed upon, but the dust with the serpent, or the husks of created things with the swine. He has never been satisfied, he never could get enough; still red hunger has been upon him, like those who eat but are not satisfied. But good tidings, O famished sinners! our Lord Jesus Christ has made a feast for hunger-bitten sinners, and they are all invited to it: Isa. lv. 2, "Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." It is the best of feasts, where the soul may feed to the full. Jesus himself is the maker, and also the matter of it; all the benefits of the covenant are the provision which are served up at this feast, he who eats thereof shall never die. It is true, that most men put no value upon it: Prov. xxvii. 7, "The full soul loatheth an honey-comb." But, Psalm xxii. 26, "The meek shall eat and be satisfied." It will be good tidings to hungry souls, who are sick of the dust and of husks, and are longing to eat bread in their Father's house, where there is plenty and to spare.—These tidings relate,

6. To a treasure: 2 Cor. iv. 7, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." Man was broken by his fall, he lost all his goods, and all his credit in heaven; so that absolute poverty reigns among Adam's sons, who have neither in them nor on them for the present necessity, and besides are drowned in debt to the justice of God.

But good tidings, poor sinners! There is a treasure hid in the field of the gospel, which will enrich you; and by the gospel you are pointed to it. O buy the field; Matth. xiii. 44. In this field are the most precious things, precious promises, and within them precious Christ, with all his merits; gold tried in the fire, white raiment and eye-salve, Rev. iii. 18. Here is variety of all good things, and abundance. They who are rich in their own eyes will not value this treasure; but to the meek poor ones it will be glad tidings. They will readily do as the man, Matth. xiii. 14, who sold all that he had, and bought the field in which the great treasure was hid.—These tidings relate,

7. To a marriage, a most happy match for poor sinners: Hos. ii. 19, 20, "And I will betrothe thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betrothe thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies; I will even betrothe thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord." The Bridegroom is the Royal Mediator, who is content to match with poor captive souls. We are naturally of the house of hell: John viii. 44, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." This being our case, we could have no hopes of being comfortably disposed of. But good tidings, O children of the devil's family! you may be married to the Son of God, who for that end has taken on our nature; he says, Matth. xxii. 4, "All things are ready; come unto the marriage." This match is the most honourable, the richest, the happiest of which we are capable. There is nothing to hinder the match, he will make you lovely; and, what is more, he will make you willing. Most men despise this marriage, they prefer their farms and merchandise to it. But the poor meek ones will as gladly embrace it, as ever a captive woman, to save her life, would match with the most desirable conqueror.—These tidings relate,

8. To a victory, a glorious victory: Isa. xxv. 8, "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord will wipe away tears from all eyes." There is no getting to the heavenly Canaan, without fighting our enemies; which would, if possible, keep us out there. We are not able for them; sin, Satan, and death are too strong for us. But, good tidings! Christ has fought that battle, and obtained a glorious victory; he offers you a share of the victory and spoils; Rev. iii. 21, "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Join the conqueror, come up at his back against your spiritual enemies, and ye shall be more than conquerors through him that loved us, Rom. viii. 37. They who have not yet broke their covenant with death, and agreement with hell, will slight this

victory. But it will be good tidings to the meek poor ones, who would fain break through the host of their spiritual enemies, but know not how to make it out. These tidings relate,

Lastly, To a peace, a most desirable peace: Eph. ii. 14, "For he (Christ Jesus) is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." Sin made discord, and broke the peace between heaven and earth; so that God and the sinner became enemies. All access to God, all communication betwixt heaven and earth was blocked up. But good tidings! Christ has made peace by his own blood. It is offered to you, Isa. xxvii. 4, 5, "Fury is not in me; let him take of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me." It is a firm peace, on the most solid foundation, a lasting peace which will never terminate, a peace which will ere long be complete in all its parts; peace external, internal, eternal.—This will be good tidings to the meek poor ones, who are wounded with the apprehensions of God's anger, and affrighted with the thoughts of his wrath. —We are, then,

III. To shew how this work of preaching is and hath been performed by Jesus Christ. As to this, we observe, that he performed it under the Old Testament, and under the New Testament dispensation.

First, He performed this work under the Old Testament dispensation. Under this dispensation,

1. The first proclamation of these tidings was done personally by himself in paradise, to the compendized world, our first parents: Gen. iii. 15, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." The Son of God, appearing in human shape, as a prelude of his incarnation, sat as their Judge, and as the first interpreter of his Father's mind, preached the first gospel to them in that promise, which contains the substance and abridgement of the whole gospel. He was absolutely the first, in all respects, who preached the good tidings of the gospel.

2. The second proclamation was by his ambassadors in his name, who were of two sorts:—Extraordinary; namely, the prophets whom he inspired infallibly to teach the people: 2 Pet. i. 21, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."—And ordinary teachers, such as priests and Levites under the law, priests and others before the law. And in respect of this preaching by men in his name, he is said to have preached to those who lived before the flood: 1 Peter iii. 19, "By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison." There was also a proclamation,

3. By his written word, Deut. xxx. 11—14. This is his own word, where the meek poor ones may always find the glad tidings of salvation. Before it was written, they never wanted inspired men, and when it was written, though for a time they might want prophets, yet this they had always from him as an infallible rule.

2*dly*, He preached and preaches under the New Testament dispensation. This he did,

1. By his own personal preaching in the days of his flesh, when he went about among the Jews, preaching to them as the Minister of the circumcision: Rom. xv. 8, "Now I say, that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." So that he himself, by himself, did begin this dispensation. The gospel at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, Heb. ii. 3, "He spake as never man spake, and taught as one having authority." He did it,

2. By inspiring his apostles to preach and write the doctrines of salvation, contained in the New Testament, on whom he poured out his spirit, and by their writings, they being dead, yet speak to us from him and by him. He does it,

3. By raising up and continuing always a gospel-ministry in the church: Eph. iv. 11—13, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." And with them he has promised to be present always, even unto the end of the world; Matth. xxviii. 20. These preach in his name, as deputed by him to declare these good tidings.

Thus you see this work is performed by the Son of God, not only by himself, but by his servants in his name. And though the mistakes, errors, and unfaithfulness of ordinary ministers, both under the Old and New Testament, are solely their own, their preaching of the true doctrine of the gospel is indeed his; they are but as it were the voice, he is the speaker. For, he gave and gives the gifts whereby they are fitted to preach the gospel. All their tapers are lighted at his shining lamp: John i. 9, "That was the true light, which lighteth every one that cometh into the world." Their wisdom and knowledge in divine mysteries is given them by him, for the good of his church, Eph. iv. 8. Their commission is from him, and from him they derive their power and authority, Matth. xxviii. 19, 20. They are his ministers and servants, sent out upon his work, and to him they must give an account. *Lastly*, The effi-

cacy of their ministry is solely owing to him and his Spirit, 1 Cor. iii. 7, "So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." He makes it effectual to his elect ones.—We are,

IV. To give the reasons of the doctrine, or shew, that none but he was fit to be employed in this work. This will appear if we consider,

1. That none but he could reveal the secrets of love, which were hid from eternity in the breast of God: John i. 18, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Neither man nor angel could open up these. But he was privy to his Father's counsels, as being in the bosom of the Father from all eternity.

2. None but he was fit to be an universal preacher to all persons for whom these tidings were designed, and to whom they were to be carried, and this in all ages. Who else could have the great charge of this weighty business? This required one of infinite wisdom, and one every where present.

Lastly, Whose testimony but his could be a sufficient ground of faith in this, of all matters the most important? Here lies the weight of God's honour, and the salvation of an elect world; and this required no less solid a bottom than the testimony of truth itself.

SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

SERMON XLIX.

ISAIAH lxi. 1,

The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek.

HAVING gone through the doctrinal part of this subject, by offering what was intended on the several heads of method which we laid down, we shall now, as was proposed,

IV. Make some practical improvement; and this in uses of information, trial, and exhortation.

We are, in the *first* place, to improve this subject in a use of information.

I. Hence you may learn what is the great cause of slighting the gospel, of that coldrife entertainment which it gets amongst most of its hearers, that little relish which there is for the great truths of

the gospel; why so few do comply with the gracious calls which it affords. People may attribute this to what causes they will, but the true cause is the want of this meekness and poverty of spirit. Instead of this, there are pride and self-conceit, unsubdued and unmortified. I may branch these out into several particulars, as opposed to this meekness. There is,

(1.) No due sense of spiritual wants: Prov. xxvii. 7, "The full soul loatheth the honey-comb." Most men are sick of a Laodicean disease, saying in their practice as they said in their hearts, that "they are rich and increased in goods, and stand in need of nothing," Rev. iii. 17. They are not mourning under their want of light, of life, and of holiness. They reign as kings with what they have, though, as with King Saul, God is departed from them. Hence they do not value that treasure which is hid in the field of the gospel.

(2.) Men have no true sight and sense of their own sinfulness. They see not the sinfulness of their nature, of their hearts, lips, and lives, but are like Samson, without his two eyes: Matth. ix. 12, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." They are pining away in their sins; their sickness has not yet taken them by the heart; their wounds are not lanced; the law has not had its effect upon them, and therefore the gospel is not relished.

(3.) Their eyes are veiled, so that they see not their misery by sin, and as being without Christ: Hos. vii. 9, "Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not; and they do not return to the Lord their God, nor seek him for all this." Did they see the clouds of wrath which are hanging above their heads, the quick approaches which death with its sting is making towards them, their separation from God, and from all the privileges of the covenant, they could not be at ease. The gospel-tidings would be to them as life from the dead.

(4.) They are strangers to their utter inability to help themselves. They are like Samson, in another case, who knew not that his strength was departed from him. We may see how corrupt nature changes itself into various shapes on this point. If you urge men to ply the work of their salvation, Alas! say they, we can do nothing; they thus make it a covert for their sloth. Urge them with the necessity of reformation and repentance, they say, It is time enough, they will attend to this afterwards; as if it were in the power of their hand to do this business at any time: they thus make it a covert for their delays, and still have no relish for the gospel.

(5.) They do not feel their need of Christ: Rev. iii. 17, "They need his blood and Spirit, but they are not duly sensible of their

need." Their own works are big in their own eyes, and appear to them sufficient in order to obtain God's favour. Their natural and acquired abilities are also with them sufficient in order to their sanctification; they are by no means shaken out of themselves; therefore the offer of the gospel is but an offer of food to the full soul, and so is loathed.

(6.) They see not their own unworthiness of a Saviour's help; they come to the market of grace with their money in their hand. They look on themselves as worthy of what Christ should do for them, Luke vii. 4. Though they be perhaps so far humbled as to see they must have mercy and help from the Lord, yet they look on their reformation and duties as what cannot but recommend them to Christ beyond many others. They cannot see how the Lord can reject those who come so far a length as they do. Hence the doctrine of free grace is but tasteless to them.

(7.) They have no anxiety for the supply of their soul-wants. They want grace and holiness, but they can be easy without them. Like foolish virgins, they sleep on at ease, while they have no oil for their lamps: Prov. vi. 10, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep." Their desires are keen after the world, but weak, faint, and languishing after spiritual good things. They have no hunger and thirst after them. Hence they value not the gospel, nor the fountain of living waters.

(8.) They are not content with Christ but on terms of their own making. They are like those who seek to buy a commodity which yet they can be without. If they can get it at their own price, they will take it; if not, they can want it. There are right-eye sins, yet they will by no means part with them. They are not pleased with the covenant, some things are in it which they must have out; there are some things out which they must have in, else they will not come into it. Hence they care not for the gospel, or that covenant which it reveals.

2. Hence learn, that slight the gospel-call who will, the meek, the poor in spirit will gladly receive it. They who are shaken out of themselves by the law, will be glad to creep under that shelter which is held forth in the gospel. These souls will feast sweetly on what is tasteless to others, what others tread under feet and despise. The hungry are glad of that for which the full soul has no appetite; and just it is in this case.—This subject informs us,

3. Of the dignity and honour of the work of the ministry. With Paul, we would not be ashamed to magnify that office which is conversant about those things which are most necessary for the world, which bring the highest honour to God, and the greatest good to

mankind. It is true, it is often a despised office in the world; but wisdom is justified of her children. God had but one Son, and he made him a minister, a preacher of the gospel. He is the chief shepherd and bishop of souls, and therefore the office of the ministry will be esteemed by all those who have a true esteem for Christ. It informs us,

4. Of that good-will which the Father and the Son jointly bear to sinners; since the Father put his own Son into this work, and the Son readily engaged in it. Do they not by this say, "Why will ye die?" It was good-will to men in its utmost height, that ever such tidings were to be carried, and that ever such a messenger was employed. It informs us,

5. How acceptable meekness and poverty of spirit are unto the Lord, who has put a peculiar article in Christ's commission for such. As to others, he is to humble and bring them down; as to these, he is to refresh and revive them with good news. It informs us,

6. As to the goodness and weight of the good tidings of the gospel, which are brought to us by such a hand. Surely the weight of the matter must be great, when such a messenger was sent to publish it. We are informed,

7. As to the danger of slighting these tidings, though men be employed in carrying them; for they speak in the name of the great Messenger, preach in the name, and by the authority of, the great preacher. So he that "despiseth them, despiseth him that sent them:" Heb. ii. 3, "How shall they escape, if they neglect so great salvation?"

This subject may be improved,

Secondly, In an use of trial.

Hereby we may try whether we be meek and poor or not. What relish have we for gospel truths? The meek, the poor in spirit, (and such all must be who are true Christians), have a singular relish for the word of the gospel. It tastes to them very differently from what it does to any in the world besides. Job says, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food," chap. xxiii. 12. David says, "They are more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb;" Psalm xix. 10.—For,

1. They are admitted to partake of the kernel of the word, while others break their teeth on the shell. It comes to them as it did to the Thessalonians, 1 Thess. i. 5, "Not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." It has not been a dry channel to them, or a dead letter, but the ministration of the Spirit. Therefore the apostle says, 1 Pet. ii. 2, 3, "As new-

born babes, desire ye the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.' And this first taste of it leaves a relish behind it: the drawing by of the veil has discovered the treasure in the earthen vessels.

2. It is their food, food proper, and suitable to their new nature: Deut xxxii. 47, "For it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life." All living creatures have their proper food; thus one relishes and delights in that which another does not desire. The new creature is nourished by the sincere milk of the word, 1 Pet. ii. 2. This is natural to them, for the saints have had their life by it, they are born again by the incorruptible seed of the word of God, 1 Pet. i. 23. Thus the saints have a peculiar relish for the word of God, while others do not regard it; more than the dog does the hay, which, though the ox feeds sweetly on it, yet it is not agreeable to the dog.

Lastly, All their hopes are in it; it is all their salvation, and all their desire; 2 Sam. xxiii. 5; take this from them, and what have they more? Hence they are content to part with all to buy this field; Matth. xiii. 44, and to part with life itself rather than the gospel, Mark viii. 35.—What wonder is it that a landed man should have delight in reading his charter, the pardoned criminal in reading the king's pardon, which another has not? As natural is it that the Christian should have a delight peculiar to himself in reading and hearing the gospel. Here occurs a

QUESTION, Since hypocrites may have a relish of the good tidings of the gospel, how shall I distinguish between their relish and the relish of a sincere Christian, who is meek and poor in spirit?—To this I

ANSWER, Hypocrites may have some desire, and wait upon public ordinances; Isa. lviii. 2. Like the stony-ground hearers, they may receive the word joyfully, Matth. xiii. 20; but yet there are great differences betwixt their desires and those of a sincere Christian.—Such as,

1, The sincere Christian relishes the good tidings of the gospel as good, yea, as the best for him, so as that he can lay the weight of his salvation, for time and eternity, upon this word, and choose it for his portion; Psalm cxix. 111; whereas the hypocrite may relish them as good, but not as the best for him; so that, for all the relish he has of this word, he has another thing which he looks on as still better for him. He has something else on which he is disposed to lay at least part of his weight before the Lord; for he is never poor in spirit, nor shaken out of his own righteousness. But the Christian has no confidence in the flesh; Phil. iii. 3.

2. The Christian gets his relish for the gospel, by seeing the extreme bitterness of sin; Acts ii. 37, "When they heard this they were pricked to the heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" But the hypocrite comes easier by his; "When he hears the word, he anon with joy receives it," Matth. xiii. 20. No man can relish health at the rate one does who is brought back from the gates of death. Many relish the sweetness of the word to whom sin was never made bitter; or if it was, it was never the bitterest of all things. Hence the relish for such is very superficial. But God puts in more and more bitterness in sin to his own people, till it becomes of all bitters the bitterest; and then they truly relish the good tidings of the gospel.

3. The Christian's relish for the gospel is the most powerful and overcoming relish which he has. The hypocrite's is not so; Psalm xxvii. 4, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." So says the Christian, but of the hypocrite it is said, Ezek. xxxiii. 31, "They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." The sincere Christian chooses Christ peremptorily, if they should beg with him. They see such a suitableness in him to their case, that they must have him on any terms; whereas the hypocrite gets only half a look of Christ in the gospel. Hence he has only half affection for him, a kind of hankering after him. Christ is sweet to them, but still some one lust is sweeter; so that, like Orpah, they leave him, but not without some affection for him. But the Christian-like Ruth cleaves unto him, and thereby is brought to honour.

Lastly, The Christian relishes all the tidings of the gospel in every particular of them, whereas the hypocrite has always something in them which he does not approve of. The Christian without shame has respect to all God's commandments, Psalm cxix. 6. He relishes the goodness of the promises, and also the holiness of the commandments. "He esteems all God's precepts concerning all things to be right," ver. 128. Herod heard John gladly till his beloved lust was touched. And so do many, they love the word, with the exception of that which strikes against their beloved lusts.

This subject may be improved,

Thirdly, In an use of exhortation.

As ever you would relish the good tidings of the gospel, labour to be meek and poor in spirit. Would you have your souls refreshed

at ordinances? Would you partake of the goodness of our Lord's house, and find that in ordinances, which is the hidden manna, which the carnal world knows not of? Well, take this course; it is the way to prepare yourselves for it.

1. Keep up always a deep sense of your own sinfulness, wretchedness, and absolute need of Christ. Our Lord was called the friend of publicans and sinners, because they who saw the least good in themselves got most of his converse; 1 Pet. v. 5, "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." The low valleys have the waters running in them, when they run off the high hills as fast as they come on; Isa. xl. 4, "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low." The man who feels his disease prizes the remedy, while he who is raving and insensible disregards it.

2. Be of a teachable disposition; this is true meekness; Psalm xxv. 9, "The meek will he teach his way." They who sit down to judge the word, rather than to be judged by it, may meet with what may disgust or please their fancy, but are out of the way of the true spiritual relish for the word; James, i. 21, "Wherefore, lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save our souls." How many a week Christian's soul is refreshed with that word, in which men who have knowledge, but not grace, find nothing. They will be sure to profit who lie down at the Lord's feet, to learn and receive the word as the word of God.

3. Be much in reviewing and mourning over your spiritual wants. Look not so much to what you have attained, as to what you are yet short of. Imitate Paul, in "forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to those things that are before," Phil. iii. 13. Mourn over your darkness, deadness, and unholiness. Let these be your continual burden, and you shall not want a word in season, Isa. l. 4. Jesus hath the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season to him that is weary. This would make you lie at the catch for a word from the Lord, like Benhadad's servants in another case, and receive the Lord's message greedily, as what in one way or another will profit you.

4. Cry much to God for communion with him in gospel-ordinances. Come to ordinances in a believing expectation of enjoying it. Set yourselves to receive the gospel as the Lord's word to you, which worketh effectually in you that believe. The Lord appoints sinners to meet with him there, saying, "In all places where I record my name, I will come into thee, and I will bless thee," Exod. xx. 24. Propose a meeting with him there also, and you may be sure it will

hold. Like Jacob, you will prevail with God to bless you, Hos. xii. 4, compare Gen. xxxv. 1. Christ had promised the Spirit, and commanded the disciples to wait for him, Acts i. 4. They continued in prayer, ver. 14. See the fruit of it, chap. ii.

Lastly, Be thankful for the least of God's mercies, and be submissive to the Lord under every trying dispensation, as sensible of your utter unworthiness. When was it that Jacob got the blessing? Was it not when in this frame, "I am not worthy," said he, "of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands." A sense of unworthiness as to the least mercies, cannot miss to produce in you a relish for the great mercies of the gospel.

There are many complaints as to the want of God's presence in ordinances. There is not that found in them which was in former times. Many lay the blame of this on ministers; and, I dare say, there is not either a godly minister in Scotland, or a godly Christian, acting as such, who dare refuse that he has a real share in it. The clean, to cast stones at the guilty, must come out from among those ministers and people who are strangers to their own hearts, and see better into others than they do into themselves. But however it be, I dare promise, in the name of the Lord, that the hungry shall not be sent empty away. The meek poor ones shall be feasted in ordinances; and their hungry souls shall be refreshed with the gospel, fare with others as it will; Psalm xxii. 24, "The meek shall eat, and be satisfied," Matth. v. 6, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." O! but the spiritual relish for the word is well worth all the trouble which is necessary for having it. For,

1. This is the hidden manna peculiar to God's hidden ones on earth: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna," Rev. ii. 17. We read, Exod. xvi. 13, 14, of the dew under which the manna lay. The ordinances are that dew; communion with Christ in ordinances, by relishing his word, is the manna under it. The ordinances are the cabinet; this is the opening of the cabinet, and the finding of the jewel, the drawing by the veil, and beholding the glory; the digging up the field, and falling on the treasure; the breaking the shell, and getting out the pearl.

2. This would make the Sabbath the most pleasant day in all the week, the hours of worship the most pleasant hours, which now to most are a weariness. See how the Gospel, felt in its power, doth affect: Isa. ix. 3, "They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil." Com-

pare ver. 2. If you had ever any experience of this relish, dare you say but that these were your golden days, even the best time ever you had in your life, and that all the world could never make up your loss since you wanted them? You who never tasted of it believe others, since you are not capable of judging in the matter: Psal. lxxxiv. 10, "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand." Believe those who have got that at ordinances, which has made them joyfully embrace persecution, banishment, a scaffold, and a fire.

3. This would readily hang about you all the week, in a holy, savoury, tender disposition, and make you rejoice at the return of the Sabbath: Psalm cxxii. 1, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." It is good being in Christ's company in his sanctuary; wherever they go afterwards, they smell of his good ointments: knowledge is taken of them that they have been with Jesus, Acts iv. 13. Remember what is said of the Gospel, 2 Cor. ii. 16, "To the one we are the savour of death unto death, and to the other the savour of life unto life." Alas! how rank and unsavoury are the conversations of most, because they never get a relish for the word.

4. This would make you useful Christians. The woman of Samaria, as soon as she relished the Gospel, she got another spirit. As she had been formerly a prop of the devil's kingdom, and an agent for him in the place where she lived; she now, when converted by grace, turns useful for others. This would make you naturally commend the way of God to others, would make you useful in your families, in the congregation, and in the country-side.

Lastly, This would be a heaven on earth. What is the happiness of the saints in glory? They enjoy God, and this is in the utmost perfection. You should relish that enjoyment of him, which in your measure you have for the present, as a prelude, an earnest of what shall be your privilege hereafter.

I shall have done with a word to all in general, and in particular to meek poor ones.—To all in general, I would say, Entertain the good tidings of the Gospel, slight them not, give them a suitable entertainment. Believe them as undoubted truths. When God speaks, it is reasonable we believe; for he is Truth, he is the faithful and true Witness, Rev. iii. 14. The carnal mind is apt to fall into unbelief of the Gospel, which reflects great dishonour upon God: 1 John v. 10, "He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." And this also makes the Gospel unprofitable to ourselves: "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with

faith in them that heard it," Heb. iv. 2. Embrace these tidings joyfully and thankfully; they are tidings of great joy, and should be received with the greatest joy and cheerfulness: as a malefactor on the scaffold should receive the tidings of a pardon, or as an indemnity would be received by those who have forfeited their lives by their treason. And the greater the danger is from which the Gospel proclaims deliverance, the more welcome should the tidings be. Finally, lay the weight of your souls on these tidings for time and eternity, fall in with the Gospel-contrivance, and embrace the covenant as well ordered in all things, and sure, Matth. xiii. 44. Embrace the salvation; come away with the Redeemer, accept the ransom, accept the indemnity, put your case in the hand of the great physician, and all shall be well. To prevail with you as to this, consider, for MOTIVES,

From whence the tidings come. It is from a far country, from heaven, the throne of God, yea, the depths of the counsel of God, John i. 18. Behold tidings of love and good-will from heaven, of a mercy-seat set up there for poor sinners, from whence they could have looked for nothing but wrath! Consider,

Who brings the tidings,—the Son of God. O! glorious messenger, who left the Father's bosom, and came down into this earth, to proclaim the glad tidings. And now that he is ascended into heaven, he has sent his ministers in his name to proclaim them, with his certification, That he who heareth you, heareth me; and he who despiseth you, despiseth me; and he who despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me. Consider,

What are the tidings. Tidings of a salvation, a redemption, &c. They are good tidings, the best of tidings that ever came into the world. Good to refresh and revive the spirits of those whom nothing else can comfort, even sinners depressed under apprehensions of wrath; and the more to be esteemed that they are peculiar to sinful men, not fallen angels. "Unto you, O men! I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." Consider,

The need there was of these tidings in the world. Never did tidings come so seasonably to any, as those of the Gospel to the world ruined by sin. We were as Isaac, with the knife at our throat, when the tidings came of Jesus Christ, as the ram caught in the thicket. Let us but suppose the world without the Gospel, we will then have a fiery law, flaming on our faces, and no way whatever to escape. Thus will we see the seasonableness of Gospel tidings.

To meek poor ones, in particular, I would say, O! sensible sinners, pressed with the sense of your spiritual wants, your sinfulness,

misery, inability to help yourselves, you who see your absolute need of Christ, and withal your unworthiness of his help, who are longing for supply, and content with Christ on any terms, to you is the word of this salvation sent particularly; come away, and joyfully embrace these good tidings. To influence you to this, consider,

That your names are particularly in Christ's commission. He was sent to preach good tidings to the meek. The Lord knows that the poor convinced sinner will have many doubts and fears, which will be hard for him to overcome, so as to get the tidings believed. Therefore, as in Mark xvi. 7, the angel said unto the woman, "Go your way, tell his disciples, and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee, there shall ye see him, as he said unto you." So here particular notice is taken of the meek. God has a special eye on the outcasts of Israel to bring them in to himself, Isa. lv. 1. Again, consider,

That the grand end for which the Lord discovers to you your spiritual poverty is, that you may come to Christ for supply; Gal. iii. 24, "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." God brought a famine on Jacob's household in Canaan, when there was corn in Egypt, that Joseph's brethren might have an errand to him. Therefore reject not the counsel of God against yourselves. Consider farther,

That Christ is able to supply all your wants: "Open thy mouth wide," says he, "and I will fill it," Psalm lxxxi. 10. Were your wants as great as Paul's, as Mary Magdalene's, as Manasseh's were, he has enough to supply them all, a fulness of merit and of spirit. If all the world were so poor in spirit, there is enough for them all, and to spare; there is an infinite value in his blood, and an infinite efficacy in his spirit. Consider,

That you cannot get the supply of your wants anywhere else; Acts iv. 12, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." Alas! poor sinners are ready to go to wrong doors for supply, and to seek to have their wants supplied by themselves. But all your duties, prayers, watchings, mournings, will do no good, unless you believe; John vi. 29, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Consider, lastly,

That our Lord makes you welcome to him and his fulness, and that freely, Isa. lv. 1. I dare not come to Christ, says one. Why so? Christ is a gift, even the gift of God, John iv. 10; and what is freer than a gift? Nothing is required of you but to receive it. Incline, then, your ear, and come unto him; hear, and your souls shall live.—Amen.

JESUS BINDS UP THE BROKEN-HEARTED.

SERMON L.

ISAIAH lxi. 1,

To bind up the broken-hearted.

IN these words, we have another piece of work which the Father has put in Christ's hand. He hath sent him "to bind up the broken-hearted." In the words there is, 1. The work itself, *to bind up;* Luke hath it *to heal,* chapter iv. 18. He is employed by the Father as the great Physician to bind up sinners, as a surgeon does a broken bone or any other wound, and to heal them. This belongs to his priestly office. We have, 2, The objects of it; "the broken-hearted," such as are sick of sin, who have their hearts broken and cast down within them, on account of sin, and its consequences. This is a sickness which Christ is sent to cure.

From this subject, you may observe the following

DOCTRINE, Our Lord Jesus is appointed of his Father, to be the Physician of broken-hearted sinners, to bind them up, and heal them.

For illustrating this doctrine, we shall consider,

I. What is that brokenness of heart, which is here meant.

II. What is it in and about sin which breaks the man's heart, who is thus evangelically broken-hearted.

III. What sort of a heart a broken heart is.

IV. How the Lord Christ binds up, and heals the broken-hearted.

V. Make some improvement.—We are then,

1. To inquire what is that brokenness of heart which is here meant, and of which the Lord takes so much notice. The broken-hearted is of two kinds.

1. There is a natural one, arising from natural and carnal causes merely, which worketh death, 2. Cor. vii. 10. Thus many who are very whole-hearted in respect of sin, complain that their hearts and spirits are broken by their crosses, afflictions, and ill usage which they meet with in the world. Thus Ahab, Haman, and Nabal, their hearts were broken with their respective crosses. This is nothing but the crack which a proud heart gets by God's providence, when it will not bow, and is very displeasing in God's sight. This Christ will not heal, till it is broken at another rate. There is,

2. A religious broken heart, which arises from religious causes, namely, sin and its consequences. Sin has sunk into the souls of

all Adam's posterity, like a deadly poison. But most men are whole-hearted, though they carry their death about with them, because the poison has not yet begun to work. The thorn of guilt is sticking in their conscience, but they are easy, for it has not yet begun to fester. But when the poison begins to work, the heart is broken with it. Every such breaking of heart is not the sickness unto life which Christ is sent to heal. There is a twofold religious breaking of heart.—*First*, A mere legal one; Jer. xxiii. 29, "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" When the heart is broken by the mere force of the law, it is broken as a rock in pieces by a hammer, each part remaining hard and rocky still. As it breaks the heart of a malefactor, to hear his doom pronounced that he must be hanged for his crime; so does the law break the heart of a sinner. This breaks the heart for sin, but not from it. Thus the hearts of Cain and Judas were broken, and thus the hearts of the damned shall be broken for ever. Men may die of these wounds, and never be healed. But there is,—*Secondly*, An evangelical one. When not only the law does its part, but the gospel also breaks the sinner's heart; Zech. xii. 10, "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplication; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." This is that kindly heart-breaking for sin, which is an effect of gospel-grace, a sickness of which never one shall die, it is the very malady which in the text Christ is sent to cure. Sin in an ungracious soul, is like poison in a serpent, it is agreeable to their nature, it does not make them sick at all. Though it be indeed with them as a kind of serpent, from whose killing looks men defend themselves, by holding a glass betwixt them and the serpent, which reflects the poison on the serpent himself, and so kills him. Thus, Psalm vii. 16, "The wicked man's mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealings shall return upon his own pate." But in those in whom God has a gracious work, sin is like poison in a man, contrary to his nature, and so makes him heart-sick. Thus the true broken-hearted sinner is as sick of sin as ever a man was of poison, which he had unwarily swallowed down, and would by all means be quit of it. We now come,

II. To inquire what it is in and about sin which breaks the man's heart, who is thus evangelically broken-hearted. There is,

1. The guilt of sin, by which he is bound over to the wrath of God. This, which cannot be taken away but by a free pardon, sick-

ens the poor creature at the heart; Isaiah xxxiii. 24, "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." This guilt is their burden, a burden on their backs, on their heads, on their spirits, which makes them to cry out, as in Hosea xiv. 2, "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." They find the load, and their spirits are broken under it, as a burden which they are not able to bear. There is,

2. The domineering power of sin, or its tyranny, by which they are led captives to it. This is breaking to them that lusts are so strong, and they so weak, that they cannot get the mastery over them as they would; Rom. vii. 23, 24, "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" For some time the yoke of sin sat soft on their necks, they walked willingly after its commandments; but now they are weary of its dominion, averse to submit to its rule, and their hearts are broken under the weight of those iron fetters from which they would now fain be delivered. There is,

3. The contrariety which is in sin to the holy nature and law of God. The commandment is come into the heart, which it is inclined to obey, and so that contrariety is breaking; Rom. vii. 13, "Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me, by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." The love of God has so touched the heart, as to produce in him a considering sin to be bitter as death. The soul is wounded and cast down to think of its grieving the Spirit, trampling on the holy law, sinning against mercies, against checks and reproofs; and accounts itself very miserable in thus requiting the Lord. There is,

4. The indwelling of sin, and its cleaving so close to a person that he cannot shake it off; Rom. vii. 24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He sees sin to be in his heart and life, and not only so, but that it is interwoven into his very nature, and not to be totally extirpated till death. He has now a sincere love to holiness, an ardent desire of perfection, Phil. iii. 13, 14; an hearty hatred against sin, and an irreconcileable enmity to it; so that it cannot but be breaking to him, while he sees the unwelcome guest still within his habitation. There is,

5. Sin's mixing itself with all he does, even with his best duties: Rom. vii. 21, "I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is

present with me." In the fairest line which he writes, sin leaves a blot; and on the purest and most sacred of God's holy things to which he puts hand, sin drops its defilement. This is breaking to a holy heart. When he reviews his duties, and sees what deadness, what want of faith and love is in his prayers, hearing, communicating, and the like, what unwatchfulness, untenderness, and ungodliness, in his daily walk, he is loathsome in his own eyes, and sick, heart-sick of his sinful self.

6. Frequent backslidings into sin are very breaking in this case. The Lord complains of breaking by these; Ezek. vi. 9, "I am broken," says he, "with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me, and with their eyes which go a-whoring after their idols." And, on the other hand, they are most breaking to the sensible sinner himself; Jer. xxxi. 18, "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God." O how heavy is it to a gracious heart, to be so often falling back into evils mourned over and resolved against! How near the heart of a sick man must it go, to be so often relapsing, after he has been in a fair way of cure. Nothing is more powerful to make one say of life, I loathe it. There is,

7. Desertions, hidings of the Lord's face, and interruptions of the soul's communion with God. See how breaking these are, Isa. liv. 6, "For the Lord hath called thee, as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God." Sometimes the soul is brought very low by desertions, and ready to give up all for lost: Lam. iii. 18, "And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord." This is a bitter root, springing up from sin, and branches forth divers ways, all of them breaking to a sensible soul. There is spiritual deadness, Song v. 2. Influences from heaven are restrained, and so the heart is bound up as with bands of iron and brass. They cannot either believe, love, or mourn acceptably. All that remains is a secret dissatisfaction with their own case, only a sigh or a groan, because they cannot believe, love, or practice, as they know to be required of them, saying, Isa. lxiii. 17, "O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and harden our hearts from thy fear?" This is breaking. Next there is, prayers shut out, Lam. iii. 8. "Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer." While a Christian has access to God by prayer, and can pour his complaints into his bosom, whatsoever be his case, he has not so much to complain of. Thus Hannah, after she had done so, went her way and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad. This also encourages them to wait upon the Lord,

Micah vii. 7. But when the door of access seems to be shut, and a thick cloud is drawn about the throne, this is breaking: Lam. iii. 44, "Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our prayers should not pass through." This made Zion say, Isa. xlix. 14, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." And Psalm xx. 2, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?"—Again, there is wrath apprehended, the terrors of God seizing on the soul. "The arrows of the Almighty," said Job, "are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit, the terrors of God do set themselves against me," chap. vi. 4. This is of all terrors the most terrible, and what heart can remain whole under it? Prov. xviii. 14, "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmities, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" See how Heman was broken under this. Psalm lxxxviii. 15, "I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up; while I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted." It made Job, a grave solid man, of extraordinary piety, cry out in the congregation, as unable to contain himself, chap. xxx. 29, 30, 31, "I am a brother to dragons, and a companion to owls; my skin is black upon me, and my bones are burned with heat. My harp also is turned to mourning, and my organ into the voice of them that weep."—Finally, there are temptations dogging the soul, the more vile and horrid these are, the more dreadful. Sometimes the Lord looses Satan's chains, and he is let almost loose on a Christian, 1 Cor. xii. 7. Hence there are fiery darts shot into the heart, extraordinary temptations as to faith or practice, Eph. vi. 16; and these, though repelled, yet coming back as if a siege were laid to the soul, by an army resolved to master the town. And when, withal, one is left often to fall under these, this is most breaking to a gracious soul. There is,

Lastly, To sum up all in a word, a Christian's sinfulness, with the bitter fruits springing from his sin; these are what are breaking to his heart. He is not what God would, nor what he would have himself to be. He is dissatisfied with himself, yet cannot right his case; Rom. vii. 19, "For that which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that do I." He brings miseries on himself by his sin, and therefore is sadly broken under the thought of his case.—We now proceed,

III. To shew what sort of a heart a broken heart is. As to this we observe,

1. That it is a contrite or bruised heart; Psalm li. 17, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Not only broken in pieces like a rock, but broken to powder, and so fit to receive any impression; so the

word signifies. The heart, though before sometimes like an adamant, which mercies could not melt, nor judgments terrify, is now kindly broken and bruised betwixt the upper and nether mill-stone;—the upper mill-stone of the law, a sense of God's wrath against sin; and —the nether mill-stone of the gospel, of divine love, mercy, and favour, manifested in word and providences. If one going to break a hard stone, would lay it firm upon another hard stone, which will not yield underneath it, then, when you strike, it will either not break at all, or if it do, it will not break in shivers; but either lay it hollow, or on a soft bed, and it will break all in shivers. Thus, lay the hard heart upon the hard law, and strike it with the most dreadful threatenings of hell and damnation, it either will not break at all, or at least it will not break small. But lay the hard heart on the bed of the gospel of mercy and love, and then let the hammer of the law strike, the heart will go asunder. Legal preaching, which casts a veil over gospel-grace, is not the way to make good Christains. Joel lays the hearts of his hearers on mercy, then fetches his stroke with the hammer of the law, and cries, chap. ii. 13, "Rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil." But it is the Spirit of the Lord that carries home the stroke, else it will not do. A broken heart is,

2. A pained heart, an aching heart; Acts ii. 37, "When they heard this, they were pricked to the heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Bruising or breaking a living member is not without pain. God wounds the guilty conscience, that the sinner may see and find what an evil and bitter thing sin is; Jer. ii. 19, "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee; know therefore, and see, that it is an evil thing and a bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts." The deeper that the wound is, the sorer the heart is broken. It is pained with sorrow; Prov. xv. 13, "By sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken." A broken heart is a sorrowful heart for sin, for the offence given to God, the dishonour put on him by it, and the evil brought on one's self. Thus the broken-hearted sinner is a mourning sinner, Zech. xii. 10. The spirit of heaviness sits down on the man, till Christ bind up his wound; his joy is turned into lamentation. The heart is pained also with remorse for sin, Acts ii. 37. Every remembrance of his folly gives him a twitch by the scourge of conscience. He calls himself fool and beast for so requiting the Lord. He is heartily displeased with himself on that

account; Job xlii. 6, "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." He smites on his breast, as worthy to be pierced, Luke xviii. 13; and smites on his thigh, as worthy to be broken for what he has done. Again, it is pained with anxiety and care how to be saved from sin; Acts xvi. 30, "What shall I do to be saved?" It brings a burden of care upon his head, how to get the guilt removed, the power of it broken, and to get it expelled at length. Never was a man more anxious about the cure of a broken leg or arm, than the broken-hearted sinner is to get his soul-wounds healed, and to be free of sin, which is his greatest cross. The heart is pained with longing desires after grace; Psalm cxix. 20, "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times." The broken-hearted sinner, sensible of his spiritual wants, longs for the supply of them, pants for it as a thirsty man for water; and the delay of answering these desires makes a sick heart; Prov xiii. 12, "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick." A broken heart is,

3. A shameful heart. The whole heart in sin is impudent; but the broken heart is filled with shame. Ezra said, chap. ix. 6, "O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God; for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens." The man hangs down his head before the Lord, as not able to look up, Psalm xl. 12. He sees himself stripped of his beautiful garments, and is ashamed of his spiritual nakedness, and, with the publican, he cannot lift up his eyes. He is fallen into the mire, and is ashamed to come before God in his defilement, Isa. lxiv. 6. His vain expectations from the way of sin are baulked, and so he turns back ashamed. His reproach is discovered, he is convicted of the basest ingratitude, and so is filled with shame. As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed, Jer. ii. 26.—A broken heart is,

4. A soft and tender heart, for a broken and a hard heart are opposed to each other; Exek. xxxvi. 26, "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." When the spirit of the Lord breaks the heart with gospel-grace, he melts it down, and softens it, takes away that stonyness, stiffness, hardness, that cleaves to the heart in its natural state. The broken-hearted sinner, however, will very probably say, Alas! I find my heart a hard heart. To this I answer, to find the hardness of heart, and to be weighted and grieved with it, is a sign of tenderness, even as groaning is a sign of life: 2 Cor. viii. 12, "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not." There is no heart in this world but there is some hardness in it. There may be tears where

there is no broken heart, as in Esau, and there may be a broken and tender heart where tears are not. Try, therefore, the tenderness of your hearts by the following marks:—

Are your hearts kindly affected with providences? Thou meetest with a mercy, and it is a wonder to thee that the Lord should be so kind to such an unworthy wretch. Thou sayest as Jacob, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou has shewed unto thy servant," Gen. xxxii. 10. It melts thy heart into an earnest desire of holiness, knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance. Again, thou meetest with rebuke of providence, shewing thee that thou art out of the way, and thou darest not venture farther that way. This is a good sign; Prov. xvii. 10, "A reproof enters more into a wise man, than a hundred stripes into a fool." Again, do the threatenings of the Lord's word awe thy heart, not only in respect of gross outbreakings, but in the course of thy daily walk? Isa. lxii. 2, "But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." Art thou afraid of the Lord's displeasure more than of anything else, and must thou stand at a distance from these things which the world makes light of on that account? This is a sign of a tender heart. This reflection was comfortable to Job, chap. xxxi. 23, "For destruction from God was a terror unto me; and by reason of his highness I could not endure." Now this had a tendency to keep him free from all sin.—Finally, have the Lord's commandments an awful authority on thy conscience, so that thou art tender of offending him, and trampling on them? A hard heart can easily digest an offence against God, but a tender heart respects all his commandments, Psalm cxix. 6. A burnt child dreads the fire; and the sinner whose heart has been broken for sin dreads sin as the greatest evil. There are some who will be very tender at their prayers, it may be that they weep and pray; but then fearful untenderness appears in their ordinary walk. But shew me the person who is in the fear of the Lord all the day long, who is afraid to say or do an ill thing; I say, this is the tender person, though his prayers should be filled from beginning to end with complaints of hardness of heart; not the other; 1 John v. 3, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous."—A broken heart is,

5. A rent heart: Joel ii. 13, "And rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God." The plough of humiliation and repentance is drawn through the heart, which tears up the fallow-ground, and pierces to the very soul. Many a man's heart is rent with remorse, or rather mangled, which is never tho-

roughly rent; and so their wound goes together again after some time, and they are as before. But the truly broken heart is rent to no purpose, till the plough reach to the root of sin.

Here there may be proposed this question, What is the difference of these rendings? To this I answer, an unrenewed man's heart may be rent for sin, but it is not rent from it. The heart truly broken is not only rent for, but from sin; not only affrighted at, but framed into a hatred of it, Ezek. xxxvi. 31, "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities, and for your abominations." The heart is so broken that the reigning love of sin runs out of it, as water out of a cracked vessel, or as filthy matter out of a wound which is laid open. He digs deep, as the wise builder; the other, like Balaam, who professed a regard to the authority of God, but still loved the wages of iniquity. Again, the rent of the former either closes too soon, as those who quickly fall secure again, getting ease by bribing their consciences; or it never was closed at all, falling under absolute despair, like Judas. But the other is at length healed, yet not till the great Physician takes the cure in hand. The wound is kept open, and the soul refuseth healing, till the Lord looks down and beholds from heaven, as in Lam. iii. 50. The wound is too deep to be cured, but by his blood and Spirit, yet not so deep, but that some ray of hope is always left; there is a "who knows but the Lord will yet return?"—The broken heart is,

6. A pliable heart. The hard heart is a heart of stone, unpliable. When the spirit breaks the heart for sin, he makes it a heart of flesh, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. Hearts which the grace of God has not touched, are like young horses not used to the saddle, young bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke; they are unpliable and unmanageable, because they are not yet broken, Jer. xxxi. 18. But if ever any good may be made of that heart of thine, the spirit of God will break it; however wild and untractable it be, the Spirit will make it pliable. He will make it pliable to the will of his commandments, saying, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do? and what shall we do?" Acts ii. 37. They had often heard before what they should do, but they would not comply, but now, since their hard heart is broken, they are very pliable. Many a time the sinner's heart gets such a piercing thrust in his sinful course, that one would think, surely he will comply now. Yes, but the heart is not broken yet, therefore the man will not comply, according as Solomon represents it in the case of the drunkard, Prov. xxii. 29, 32, and 34, "They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not;

when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." But if God have any thoughts of love to him, the Spirit of God will take the case in his own hand; and were he as stiff as the devil and his hard heart can make him, he will break him to that rate, that he shall ply as wax ere he have done with him. Witness Saul the persecutor, who was so softened, that he cried, Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do? Acts ix. 6. The heart becomes pliable also to the will of his providence: Psalm li. 4. "That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be cleared when thou judgest." An unrenewed heart is a murmuring one under the hand of God, and will readily choose to sin rather than suffer. But the broken heart will say, give me thy favour, and take from me what thou wilt: Luke xiv. 26, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Sometimes one meets with an affliction, and they cry out they are broken, they are not able to bear it. God sends them a heavier one, they are stricken till they leave off weeping, and withal opens the heart-vein to bleed for sin, and so in some sort they are made to forget their affliction. And it is their great concern to get their soul's disease healed, let God do with them otherwise as he will.—A broken heart is,

Lastly, A humble heart; Isa. lvii. 15, quoted above. The hard heart is a gathered boil; when it is broken, it is discussed. As soon as the heart is broken, under a sense of sin, pride and self-conceit vanish away, and the more broken-hearted that a person is, the less proud. Paul was a proud persecutor, but the Lord laid the pride of his heart, when he broke it, Acts ix. 4, 5. Hezekiah, in his brokenness of heart is very humble: "I shall go softly," said he, "all my years in the bitterness of my soul," Isa. xxxviii. 16. O! if the proud and empty professors of this day had a taste of this broken heart, it would soon lay their gay feathers, let out the ulcers of pride, self-conceit, which are swollen so big in many a poor soul. It would turn the saying, "Stand by, for I am holier than thou," unto "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man." It would make them think little of what they have been, of what they are, and of what they have done or suffered; little of what all their attainments, gifts, yea, and graces also, if they have any, are.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

SERMON LI.

Isaiah lxi. 1,

To bind up the broken-hearted.

Having considered that brokenness of heart which is here meant,—what about sin the heart is broken for,—and described the nature of a broken heart, we go on, as was proposed,

IV. To show how the Lord Christ binds up and heals the broken-hearted.—The great Physician uses two sorts of bands for a broken heart, he binds them up with inner and with outward bands.

1. With inner bands, which go nearest the sore, the pained broken heart. And these are two.—The first inner band is,

Christ's own Spirit, the Spirit of adoption. The hearts of the disciples were sore broken at the news of Jesus leaving them, and it behoved them to bleed a while. But he tells them, he would send a healing band for their broken hearts; John xiv. 16, "And I will pray the Father," said he, "and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." Our Lord breaks his people's hearts by his Spirit, and yet by the same Spirit binds them up again. In the first work he is the Spirit of bondage, and some may be long under his hand this way. Hence we read of some "who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage," Heb. ii. 15. The Old Testament church had much of this spirit, "I am afflicted," says the psalmist, Psalm lxxxviii. 15, "and ready to die, from my youth up; while I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted."—In the next work, he is the Spirit of adoption; Rom. viii. 15, "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." He comes quickening, sanctifying, reviving, and comforting the soul. Therefore pray with David, Psalm li. 11, 12, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me; restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit."—The second inner band is,

Faith in Christ, (the band of the covenant), which he works in the heart by his Spirit. Faith is a healing band, for it knits the soul, Eph. iii. 17, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." The woman with the bloody issue, when she got a touch of the hem of Christ's garments, was presently made whole. Thus the broken-hearted sinner, when he gets hold of Christ by faith, is bound up with him in one mystical body, virtue comes from him for the soul's

healing. The virtue of his blood takes away guilt; the virtue of his Spirit breaks the power of sin. The apostle prescribes this healing band to the broken-hearted jailor; Acts xvi. 31, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house;" and the more faith that there is, the band will be the stronger, and the soul the sooner healed. Much unbelief, and little faith, keep the wounds of the soul long open; Psalm xxvii. 13, "I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." A broken-hearted sinner staving off and disputing against his believing, is like a child who has a broken leg, doing what he can to tear off the bands with which it must be bound up; but he must admit them, or his leg will never heal: John xi. 40, "Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?" Peter walking on the water, was like to break and sink quite, Matth. xiv. 30; the cause was his unbelief, ver. 31, "Jesus said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"—There are also,

2. Outward bands for a broken heart.—These also are two.

The *first* outward band is his own word, especially the promises of the gospel. This band Peter held out to the broken-hearted company; Acts ii. 38, 39, "Repent," said he, "and be baptised every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; for the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." This word has a sovereign virtue for healing; Psalm cvii. 20, "He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions." Our Lord wraps up a promise, in a soft band of love; and he makes them lay it to with their own hands; and the more closely they tie it about their broken hearts with the hand of faith, they will be the sooner whole. Say not, What can a word do? An encouraging word from men will wonderfully raise a carnally-dejected mind; and if so, certainly the Lord's word will heal a broken heart. A promise will be, in this case, like the opening of a box of perfumes to one ready to faint away; Song i. 3, "Because of the savour of thy good ointment, thy name is like ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee."

The *second* outward band is his own seals of the covenant; Acts ii. 38, quoted above. These seals are for our ingrafting into, and having communion with Jesus Christ, and so are most fit means to bind up hearts broken under a sense of sin, when they are partakers of these in faith. Hence many have been healed at such occasions; though indeed the water is not moved at all times, or at least the

broken-hearted sinner does not always step into it. It was an ancient custom, though that will not justify it, to put a white garment on persons when they were baptised. But surely our Lord has taken off the spirit of heaviness, and given the garment of praise to many at sealing ordinances. The eunuch, after he was baptised, went on his way rejoicing. The sorrowful disciples were also made glad, when, after his resurrection, Jesus made himself known to them in the breaking of bread, Luke xxiv. 35. All these bands are the Physician's absolute property. The poor patient has nothing of his own to be a band to his wounds. The Spirit is the Spirit of Christ; faith is his work; the word and sacraments are his ordinances, and their efficacy is all from him; and thus he heals them. His kindness in this instance, we may take up in these three things:—

(1.) They are justified and pardoned: Job xxxiii. 23, 24, "If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness; then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom." The sting of guilt is taken away, the poison is carried off, by a full and free pardon. Thus the seek man is whole; Isa. xxxiii. 24, "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." The blood of Christ, with which by faith the soul is bound up, cleanses the wound, and heals it; 1 John i. 7, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

(2.) They are sanctified; 1 Cor. vi. 11, "And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." The Spirit is a sanctifying spirit: faith a sanctifying grace: Acts xv. 9, "And put no difference between us and them, sanctifying their hearts by faith." The sacraments are sanctifying ordinances: 1 Cor. xii. 13, "For by one Spirit, we are all baptised into one body,—and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." By these the power of corruption, as to its reign, is broken; lusts are gradually killed, and grace is made to grow.

Lastly, They are comforted; Job xxxiii. 25, 76, "His flesh shall be fresher than a child's; he shall return to the days of his youth; he shall pray unto God, and he shall be favourable unto him: and he shall see his face with joy: for he will render unto man his righteousness." All these bands have a conforting and also a refreshing virtue. They bring the oil of joy sooner or later to the soul. The way of the Physician in this is, "According to thy faith,

so be it unto thee." And thus the broken-hearted eat of the hidden manna, they get the white stone, and in the stone a new name written: Rev. ii. 17.

V. It now remains that we make some improvement of this subject.—It may be improved in uses of information, reproof, consolation, and exhortation.

First, In a use of information.

1. This shews us the love and good-will of God to help poor sinners, especially broken-hearted ones. He has provided a glorious Physician for them, having remembered us in our low estate. O the love of the Father in investing his Son with this office! O the love of the Son in undertaking it! Especially considering what it behoved him to undergo, in order to provide the medicines: his own heart had to be broken, that sinners might be healed. We may learn,

2. The preciousness of our souls, and with all the desperateness of the diseases of sin. Surely it behoved to be a desperate disease, and the patient at the same time very precious in the Lord's sight, for which he employed such a Physician. A physician of less value than an incarnate God, would have been a physician of no value for a broken-hearted sinner. No medicine less than his blood could have been effectual, else the Saviour's heart had never been broken for blood to cure it.—We may see,

3. To whom we must go with our hard hearts. O the reigning plague of hardness of heart this day among all ranks! Ordinances, providences, mercies, judgments, cannot break them. Alas! there is little occasion to speak to broken-hearted sinners this day; it is the least part of our work, to get their hearts healed. We cannot go with whole hearts, as broken. What can we do with them? Carry them to Christ. He who can heal broken hearts, can surely break whole hearts. He is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins, Acts v. 30. A look of him would do what nothing else can do. When the Lord Jesus looked on Peter, then Peter remembered his sins, and went out, and wept bitterly; Luke xxii. 62. We shall improve this subject,

Secondly, In a use of reproof.—This doctrine reproves and condemns,

1. Those who, when their hearts are any way broken for sin, go not to Christ, but to physicians of no value; Hos. v. 13, "When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb; yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound." The Spirit of the Lord is at work with the hearts of many to break them for sin, who mar all

by their haste to be healed, which carries them to other physicians than Christ, who may palliate the disease, but never can effectually cure it. These are, the law, which is now weak through the flesh; Rom. viii. 3. The law may wound the soul, but can never heal it; Rom. iii. 20, "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified in his sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Yet many go to it for healing, namely, when they go about to pacify their consciences, not by a believing application and sprinkling of Christ's blood, but by their own prayers, vows, repentance, amendment of their ways, and the like. The law indeed may give them a palliative; by these things their consciences may be blinded and bribed, but the disease is still rooted in them, and will break forth again at last, when there is no remedy, if not sooner by the mercy of God, to prevent their final ruin.—Throng of worldly business. When Cain's heart was wounded, and he could not get out the sting which galled his conscience, he went to this physician, he went from the presence of the Lord, and built a city; Gen. iv. 16, 17. To this many run at this day, who, when their consciences begin to stir within them, fill their heads and hands with business, till they get conscience quiet. This palliates the disease by way of diversion, while it will make it only like a gathered dam, which will at length break down the wall, and overwhelm the soul with aggravated sorrows; Isa. xxx. 13, "Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out on a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant."—Jovial company. So Saul, in his distress of mind, instead of calling for his Bible to read on, calls for musicians to play to him. And it is not to be doubted, that many a man's convictions are drowned in the ale-house, hushed to silence at revelling-meetings, these supports of the devil's kingdom people are so fond of; and many good motions are spoiled and laughed away. This palliates the disease by searing the conscience, and making it senseless. But it will awaken again on them like a lion roused up, and rend the caul of those hearts which have been so healed; Hos. xiii. 6, 8. This doctrine reproves,

2. Those who offer themselves physicians to the broken in heart, in opposition to Christ and his method of cure. There are such agents for the devil, who, like the Pharisees, will neither enter in themselves, nor suffer those who would to enter. Like Elymas the sorcerer, they seek to turn away men from the faith; Acts xiii. 8. They no sooner discern any beginning of seriousness in others, but they set themselves to crush it in the bud by their wicked advices, mockings, taunts, and licentious ensnaring examples. To these I may say, as in Acts xiii. 10, "O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou

child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right way of the Lord?" The blood of the souls of such as perish by these means will lie at the door of such persons, and be required of them.

Lastly, Those are reproved, who, as their duty is, dare not go to these physicians of no value, yet do not come to Christ, which is their sin; Psalm lxxvii. 2, "My soul, refused to be comforted." It is unbelief which makes it so, and Satan will do what he can to carry it on, to deter the sinner from the great Physician. But has the Father accepted Christ a physician for broken-hearted sinners? Surely, then, they may come, and welcome; nay, they must come, or else they will never be healed. We shall now improve the subject,

Thirdly, In a use of comfort to those who are truly broken-hearted for sin in a gospel-sense. You have an able Physician, who both can and will cure you, even though Satan may be ready to tell you that your case is past cure. There is great ground of comfort for such. (1.) Your name is in Christ's commission. (2.) You know your disease, and this is a comfortable step to the cure. (3.) Never any died of your disease: Psalm cxlvii. 3, "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds."—Here, however, may be proposed this

OBJECTION, My heart has been long broken for sin, and yet there is no appearance of being healed; Jer. xiv. 19, "Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? hath thy soul loathed Zion? why hast thou smitten us, and there is no healing for us? we have looked for peace, and there is no good, and for the time of healing, and behold trouble." To this I

ANSWER, Thy soul may be healed of the disease of sin, and thy guilt removed, even the power of sin may be broken, though thy trouble does remain. David's sin was put away; 2 Sam. xii. 13. yet he cries out of broken bones; Psalm li. 8. I would advise you to wait patiently on the great Physician, and in due time he will bind thee up. Limit him not to times and seasons, which are in his own hand; he best knows how to manage his patients. Some he keeps long in trouble, to prevent pride and security, into which they are apt to fall: others he soon cures, to prevent despair or utter despondency, to which they are most liable. It only remains that this subject be improved,

Lastly, In a use of exhortation. This shall be addressed to three sorts of persons.

I would exhort whole and hard-hearted sinners to labour to get broken hearts, hearts kindly broken for sin. To prevail with you

in complying with this exhortation, I offer the following MOTIVES:—

MOT. 1. Consider the evil that there is in hardness of heart. It is very displeasing in the sight of God. Jesus was grieved with the hardness of men's hearts; Mark iii. 5. It grieves his Spirit, and highly provokes him, so that God is ever angry with the hard-hearted sinner. Suppose a man to be under never so great guilt, but his heart is broken on account of it, God is not so displeased with him as with those who, whatever their guilt be, are hard-hearted under it. It fences the heart against receiving any benefit by the means of salvation. Till the hardness be removed, it makes the heart proof against ordinances and providences; Psalm xcv. 8, "Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness." Consider, as it is with the dead tree, even in the spring, all labour is lost upon it; so is it with the hard-hearted sinner. God speaks by his word and Spirit, by mercies and judgments; but nothing makes impression on the hard heart, yea, the most softening means leave it as they found it, or most probably in a worse state. It binds up the heart from all gracious motions; Rom. ii. 4, 5, "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." This hardness is an iron band on the will, a stonyness in the heart, a hard freeze on the affections, so that the sinner cannot repent, mourn, or turn from his evil courses. It so nails him down in his wicked way, that he cannot move God-ward, cannot relent of his folly, though his danger be clearly before his eyes. In a word, it is the highway to be given up of God. Natural and acquired hardness lead the way to judicial hardness: Rom. xi. 7, "The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." When men harden their hearts against reproofs and warnings, God many a time visits them with a curse, so that they shall never after have power to relent and yield; Hos. iv. 17, "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone."

MOT. 2. Consider the excellence of a broken heart. It is very pleasing in the sight of God, and precious; Psalm li. 17, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." He looks to such, while he overlooks others; Isa. lxvi. 2. He is near to them, while far from others; Psalm xxxiv. 18. It is the way to get good of all the means of salvation; and it is the root of gracious motions in the soul. However low they lie, God will take them up, and take them

in; Psalm cxlvii. 3, "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds."

Mor. 3. The hardest heart will break at length, if not in a way of mercy, yet in a way of judgment; Prov. xxix. 1, "He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." (Heb. broken, and no healing.) Thy sins are breaking to the Spirit of God; Ezek. vi. 9. Assure thyself that the stone will roll back on thyself sooner or later; if it do not kindly break thee in a way of repentance, it will grind thee to powder in the way of wrath. To such we would give the following directions briefly:—

Believe the threatenings against sin, and apply them; Jonah iii. 5, "So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them." This belief worketh fear, and fear worketh sorrow. And though this be but legal humiliation, yet this is ordinarily a mean sanctified of God to bring forward the elect sinner to Christ, as it was when Noah builded the ark; Heb. xi. 7. Ponder thy manifold sins, on the one hand, and the rich mercies with which thou hast been visited on the other. This is a proper mean to bring the heart into a broken disposition; Rom. ii. 4, "The goodness of God leadeth to repentance." Believe and meditate on the sufferings of Christ for sin. Look how he was broken for it in a way of suffering, till thy heart be broken for it in a way of repentance; Zech. xii. 10, (quoted above).

We address ourselves, in the next place, to broken-hearted sinners. To such we say, Come to Christ as a Physician for binding up and healing your broken hearts. You have sufficient encouragement to put your cases in his hand. It is a part of the work expressly put upon him by the Father, to bind up your wounds.—He has a most tender sympathy for such broken-hearted ones; Isa. lxiii. 9, "In all their affliction, he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them and carried them all the days of old." Therefore let us improve this sympathy; Heb. iv. 15, 16, "For we have not an high priest, who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." He is very near to such, even as dwelling under one roof with them for their welfare; Isa. lxvii. 15, "For thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble

spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."—There is a particular relation betwixt him as the Physician, and the broken-hearted as his proper patients; and therefore he has a peculiar care of them; Ezek. xxxiv. 15, 16, "I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God; I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, I will feed them with judgment." You see that he will handle the broken-hearted very tenderly; Isa. xl. 11, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young; chap. xlii. 3, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth."

In the last place, we would exhort those whose broken hearts Christ has healed, to take heed to the preserving your restored health. Indeed every one who seems to be healed, is not healed by the hand of the true Physician; but if your hearts are now eased, and your wounds bound up by the great Physician, you will know it by these three things. 1. You will have an appetite for spiritual food; 1 Pet. ii. 2, 3, "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." When one begins to recover in earnest, he recovers his appetite. But such a one, say we, is not well yet, for he has no appetite; so thou art not well if thou dost want the spiritual hunger.—2. Your food will relish with you; Prov. xxvii. 7, "The full soul loatheth the honey-comb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." Many have their qualms of conscience which they get over, but still they have no relish for spiritual things, but for the world and their lusts. But if Christ has healed thee, he has corrected thy taste. *Lastly*, You will be beginning to walk in the way of God. "I will run," saith David, "in the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart," Psalm cxix. 32. They who return with the dog to the vomit, show that their disease is yet in its strength, though they are not sensible of pain.

Now, if Christ has healed you, to perceive the health of your souls, it is necessary for you to keep a good and regular diet. Beware of these things which formerly cast thee into soul-sickness. Peter went no more back to the high priest's hall, nor Judah to Tamar; Gen. xxxviii. 26. Feed there, and on these things which may tend to the soul's health. "Behold," said Jesus to the impo-

tent man he had healed, "behold thou art made whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee." And for this cause observe your Physician's rules in all things.—Walk circumspectly, take notice of every step you make, as one who has had a broken limb healed; Isa. xxxviii. 15, "I shall go softly," said Hezekiah, "all my years, in the bitterness of my soul." And beware of walking in the dark, of going forward there where you cannot discern your way by the light of the Lord's word. Study to increase in love to Christ, zeal for his glory, and hatred of sin. Always keep correspondence with your Physician. Be often at the throne of grace by prayer, and keep up communion with him in the exercise of faith. "They who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." Amen.

JESUS PROCLAIMS LIBERTY TO THE CAPTIVES.

SERMON LII.

ISAIAH lxi. 1,

To proclaim liberty to the captives.

HITHERTO we have had Christ's commission as it respects those who have some good in them, the meek and the broken-hearted. Here is his commission with respect to those who have no good in them, but are utter strangers to him, living in their natural state. He is anointed *to proclaim liberty to the captives.* In which words consider,

1. Man's natural state. It is a state of captivity: they are captives to Satan: 2 Tim. ii. 26, "And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captives by him at his will." He is the tyrant whose captives they are, who has carried them away out of the light of God's favour, and holds them fast in his territories, being the god of this world. Consider,

2. Christ's work with respect to them. It is *to proclaim liberty* to them, Luke iv. 18, "To preach deliverance to the captives." These are indeed the same. Luke's word for liberty or deliverance, is properly dismissing or letting away, that is, giving liberty. The words for preaching and proclaiming signify properly to cry, and are used either of preaching or proclaiming. And what is preach-

ing but proclaiming in the name of the king of heaven? and so this relates to Christ's kingly office.—From this part of the subject we take the following DOCTRINES:—

DOCTRINE I. That sinners in their natural unregenerate state are Satan's captives.

DOCTRINE II. That Jesus Christ, with the express consent of his Father, has issued out his royal proclamation of liberty to Satan's captives.

We begin with

DOCTRINE I. That sinners in their natural unregenerate state are Satan's captives.

For illustrating this doctrine, we shall consider,

I. How sinners in their natural state have become Satan's captives.

II. What is their condition as Satan's captives.

III. The properties of this captivity, and then,

IV. Add the improvement of the subject.

We are then,

I. To shew how sinners in their natural state have become Satan's captives. They have become his captives,

1. As taken in war; 2 Peter ii. 19, "Of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage." Satan having proclaimed war against Heaven, maliciously set on our first parents in paradise, and on all mankind in them. He set on them as the confederates of heaven, and carried his point, gained the victory. And in this respect he is still pursuing the victory, and driving the unrenewed world before him as prisoners of war, called his lawful captives, Isa. xli. 24. They have become his captives, because

2. They are born his captives, as being born of those whom he overcame and carried captive. So they are expressly called the children of hell, Matth xxiii. 15. There were many of the captives in Babylon who had never seen Canaan, having been born in that country. These were captives no less than their parents, and that by their birth. So is it with Adam's posterity naturally; they were born under the power of Satan, Acts xxvi. 18. When a slave, under the law, married in his master's house, though at the end of seven years he got his own freedom, yet the children were his master's, as being born in his house, and could not be free without a particular liberty for them, Exod. xxi. 4. Thus even the children of godly parents are by nature Satan's captives; children of Abraham, children of the devil. To the Jews our Saviour said, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do," John viii. 44. We were,

II. To enquire what is their condition as Satan's captives. Upon this we observe,

1. That every natural man is transported from his primitive soil into Satan's territories, his kingdom of darkness. Hence believers are said "to be turned from the power of Satan unto God." Acts xxvi. 18. And again, Col. i. 13, "God has delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Sinners are not now where God at first set them down; they are transported into another kingdom; like the prodigal, they have left their father's house, and gone into a far-country, where they have spent their substance, Luke xv. 13. They are far from God, his covenant, and his Son. Thou art in Satan's kingdom, O unconverted soul! a black and dismal kingdom, where sin, darkness, and death reign, where there is no gleam of saving light or life; and if thou wert awakened out of thy dream, thou wilt see matters so situated; a kingdom with which God will have war for ever; and thou art an unhappy subject of that kingdom.

2. They are plundered and robbed of all that is valuable, as captives used to be; Rev. iii. 17, "They are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." The light of the mind, the righteousness of the will, the holiness of the affections, all are lost, all has become a spoil and a prey to the hellish conqueror. Now thou art a poor captive, who hast nothing truly good left thee, nothing which the bands of hell have not made thee render up.

3. They are stripped, as has also been an ancient custom of dealing with captives. Thus, as the prophet Isaiah, ch. xx. 3, 4, walked three years naked, for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and Ethiopia; so did the king of Assyria carry away these nations captive, naked and bare-foot. What a melancholy sight is it, to see brave men, who were glittering in shining apparel and arms at the commencement of an engagement, when fallen into the hands of their enemies, stript and driven away naked before the conquerors. But yet more melancholy to see precious souls stript by Satan of their original righteousness, and driven away before him, without any covering but rags, filthy rags, Rev. iii. 17. This, O sinner, is the shameful and dangerous case which thou art in as Satan's captive.

4. They are no more masters of themselves, but under the power of the conqueror; 2 Tim. ii. 26, "They are taken captive by him at his will." Their liberty is gone, and they are slaves to the worst of masters. Wonder not that many a poor sinner is at Satan's beck, over the belly of reason and conscience, to serve the devil, to their own visible ruin. Alas! they are captives, not at their

liberty, but must go as he commands them; Rom. i. 23. "There is a law in their members, which bringeth them into captivity to the law of sin and death."

5. If they get anything that is valuable, they cannot get it kept, it is torn from them by the conqueror. As the Babylonians wasted and insulted the Israelites, when they carried them away captives, so does Satan waste and insult his captives, Psalm cxxxvii. 3. Sometimes the natural man gets a conviction of sin or duty darted in on him, and this produces relentings for sin, and resolutions to amendment of life; but they do not continue. Alas! how can they, while they are Satan's captives, who will not suffer them to think of entertaining them, more than Pharoah would endure the Israelites to think of leaving his service. Nay, he rests not till they have thrown them away.

6. They are so secured as that they cannot get away, they are kept by the strong man under the power of darkness, Col. i. 13. There is a gulf fixed between them and all spiritual good, so that they cannot pass. Satan has his guards on them, whom they cannot escape to come back to the Lord. He has them fettered with divers lusts, which they cannot shake off. And, in a word, nothing less than a power stronger than all the powers of hell can make way for the deliverance of a captive.

Lastly, If they but offer to make escape, they are more narrowly watched, stronger guards set on them, and more work put in their hands; as Pharoah did with the Israelites, so the devil does with his captives, Rom. vii. 9, 10, 11. Hence many never go so far wrong, as on the back of communions, convictions, or times of more than ordinary seriousness, the powers of hell being joined together to stop the fugitive. We now proceed,

III. To speak of the properties of this captivity. Here we observe that it is,

1. A spiritual captivity, a captivity of the soul. The soul is the most precious part of the man; and therefore the captivity of it must be the most deplorable. All the captivity of men, if they were captives to the Turks or the most barbarous nations extends but to the body. He whose body is in the power of another, his soul and thoughts are as free as those of any. But Satan lays his bands upon the inner man, and, go the body as it will, he holds fast the man, in so far as he holds fast the soul. And,

2. It is universal. It extends to all the powers and faculties of the soul, the inner man. The natural man's mind is Satan's captive; 1 Cor. ii. 14, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither

can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The Lord formed the mind of man in him, and endowed it with knowledge, to be the guide of the whole man in the way of happiness; to be the eye of the soul, to distinguish betwixt sin and duty; and the pilot to direct his course through the several rocks and quicksands that lay betwixt him and the shore of the upper Canaan. But in the engagement betwixt Satan and mankind, being wounded by the deceit of the tempter, Gen. iii 5, it fell into the hands of the enemy, who robbed it of its light, and shut up sinners in darkness. Hence they are said to be in darkness, Eph. v. 8. They cannot see the way to escape, and withal, there is struck up a false light in the mind, which, like wild-fire, leads the soul into pits and snares, causing it to put sweet for bitter, and bitter for sweet, good for evil, and evil for good. They thus "glory in their shame, and mind earthly things," Phil. iii. 19. Again, the will is his captive. They have a stony heart, Ezek. xxxvi. 16. The Lord having endowed this faculty with righteousness, and straightness with his own will, for, Eccl. vii. 29, "God made man upright," gave the will dominion over the man, that nothing, good or evil, could be done by him without it. But behold it fell likewise into the enemy's hands, who hath given it such a set to the wrong side, that no created power can again straighten it; hence, 2 Thes. iii. 5, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God." He only can do it. Satan holds it so fast, that it cannot move without the circle of evil he has drawn about it, nor can it will anything truly good in a right manner: Phil. ii. 13, "It is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Satan hath loaded it with such heavy chains, that it cannot come to Christ at his call, no more than a mountain of brass can come to a man at his call. "No man," saith Jesus, "can come unto me, except the Father who sent me draw him." Farther, the affections also are Satan's captives; Gen. vi. 5, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." The affections being made perfectly holy, were subjected to the guidance of the mind, and the command of the will, and were set in the soul to execute its holy contrivances and will. But they also were taken in this war with hell; loosed from this bond of subjection to the understanding and will in these things, but nailed to Satan's door-posts to serve him and his work in the soul for ever; so that they have no heart for the price put into their hand to get wisdom, and can have no heart to it. But the natural man's joys and delights are arrested within the compass

of carnal things, together with his desires, sorrows, and all his other affections.

3. It is a hard and sore captivity. The Egyptians and Babylonians never treated their captives at the rate Satan does his. They are held busy, and even busy working their own ruin, kicking against the pricks, digging for the grave as for hid treasures. It is their constant work to feed their lusts, to starve their souls; and the design of their master is, that the one may ruin the other. It is their daily employment, to weave snares for their own feet, twist cords to bind themselves over to destruction, and dig pits into which they may fall, and never rise again. In so far as sin is their work, they wrong their own souls, Prov. viii. 36, and shew themselves in love with death. This captivity is,

4. A perpetual captivity. A few years captivity among men, how grievous is it! And men will do what they can to be ransomed. But this conqueror will never quit his captives, unless they be taken from him by Almighty power. Death at farthest looses other captives; "For in the grave," says Job iii. 18, 19, "the prisoners rest together, they hear not the voice of the oppressor; and the servant is free from his master." But those who die Satan's captives are so far from being free, that they are ensured to him for ever and ever.

Lastly, It is a voluntary captivity, and thus the more hopeless; 1 Tim. ii. 26, "They are taken captive by Satan at his will." They need not to be driven. They do not only go, but they run at his call: Rom. iii. 15, "Their feet are swift to shed blood." Though they were taken in war, and born captives, yet now he is their master, by their own consent and choice, while they choose to serve the devil, and cannot be brought to give themselves to the Lord. It is a bewitching captivity. The sinner once captive to Satan, never cares for his liberty, unless grace changes his heart. He glories in the badges of his slavery; loves his work heartily, and is well pleased with his condition. The gracious proclamation of liberty by Christ sounds in his ears; but he says, I love my master, I will not go out free.—We are now,

IV. To make some practical improvement,

First, In a use of conviction. Know then, and be convinced, O unconverted sinner, that thou art the devil's captive. Are there not many who have never troubled their heads about their state, who never have had anything like a work of grace or conversion upon their spirits? many in whom their hopeful beginnings have been all marred? I would say to every such one, thou hast been hearing of the case of the devil's captives, and thou art the man, thou art

the woman, as fast in his power as ever prisoners of war were in the hands of their conquerors. You will not believe it, and this is your sin, and also your misery, Rev. iii. 17. You will be ready to sign yourselves, and defy the devil; though you have never been, by regenerating grace, delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, Col. i. 13. But this is Satan's way with his captives, to put out their eyes; 2 Cor. iv. 4. "He blinds the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them;" that they cannot know where they are, or who it is that has got hold of them. Do you think that it is only witches and wizards who are the devils captives? No, no, Satan may have a full possession of thy soul, though his name with thee be not Legion. Even praying people, and great pretenders to religion, to righteousness, and sobriety, and those who have turned to a strict course of life, much more to making a profession of religion, may still be children of hell, as our Saviour called the Scribes and Pharisees, Matth. xxiii. 15. And all unregenerate ones are children of wrath, and the devil's captives. He is "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience;" and they are "the children of wrath," Eph. ii. 2, 3. Will you apply what was spoken before for your conviction?—Try yourselves.

1. Art thou not, O unconverted sinner! carried off from God's gracious presence, into the kingdom of Satan, the kingdom of darkness? What knowest thou of the light of God's countenance shining on thy soul? Certainly thou wast once darkness, Eph. v. 8. Has there any spiritual saving light broke up in your soul yet? Has the long night of thy natural state had a morning yet? Or are you not in the state in which you was born? If you be not in darkness, what means your works of darkness, and your not discerning the transcendent excellence of Christ?

2. Are you not robbed and stripped of your spiritual ornaments? Where is the light of the mind, the righteousness of the will, the holiness of the affections, which man had before he fell into the enemy's hands, and which are restored in some measure to the ransomed of the Lord?

3. Are you free to righteousness? are you not under the power of the conqueror? How is it then that you have no power to resist a temptation, that Satan can so easily carry you the way you know to be wrong, over the belly of reason and conscience? Nay are not your lusts upon you like fetters, that you cannot move away from carnal things God-ward?

4. Are you not quickly spoiled of any beginnings of good which you sometimes meet with? You hear the word, but do not the fowls

pick it away from you? Have not all your convictions and resolutions gone off by degrees like a morning cloud? How quickly has all the noise within your breast been hushed, and you as much again in love with your lusts as ever!

Admit the conviction, then, for they who never saw themselves Satan's captives, are never yet made Christ's free men, John viii. 32, 33, 44, 45. What think you, is the work of grace carried on in the soul as a morning dream? Are the devil's captives brought away, and never know that they were his captives? What way can a soul embrace the proclaimed liberty to the captives, who never saw itself in this condition?—Consider, that this will be the first step to your liberty. The gospel is sent "to open your eyes, and to turn you from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that you may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ," Acts xxvi. 18. Christ's Spirit begins his work with conviction of sin and misery. He makes the captives to see where they are, whose they are, and what is their case. This rouses them out of their lethargy, makes them prize this liberty; it makes them glad to come away with their deliverer; "O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help."—This subject may be improved,

Secondly, In an use of exhortation.

O captive exiles! hasten to be loosed, that you may not die in the pit, and that your bread may not fail, Isa. li. 14. Stir up yourselves to regain your liberty, and remain no longer at ease in your captive condition. Consider,

1. That a short time's continuance in this state will put you beyond a possibility of liberty: Eccl. ix. 10, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." Thy life is uncertain, and if death carry thee off in this condition, thou wilt be carried to the lower prison, and then farewell liberty for ever and ever; Luke xiii. 24, 25, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us, and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not, whence ye are." The servant under the law, though he refused his liberty at the end of six years, yet received it in the year of jubilee. But whoso in this life refuse to come away from Satan's service, shall never see a time after for it. And when thou art closed up in the net, it must be without remedy; it will be no comfort to think that you did not imagine it would have come to this. Consider,

2. That now is the time of liberty; 2 Cor. vi. 2, "Behold now is the accepted time! behold, now is the day of salvation!" Christ has paid a ransom for Satan's captives and the liberty is proclaimed in the gospel. Strike in with the season of grace, and come away with the deliverer upon the gracious proclamation. Hear what Christ is saying to you, Song ii. 10, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away."

SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

SERMON LIII.

ISAIAH lxi. 1,

To proclaim liberty to the captives.

HAVING, in the preceding discourse, spoke to the first of the doctrines which we took from this part of the subject, we go on to

DOCTRINE II. That Jesus Christ, with the express consent of his Father, has issued out his royal proclamation of liberty to Satan's captives. "He hath sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives."

In illustrating this doctrine, we shall,

I. Shew what this proclamation is.

II. Explain what liberty is proclaimed in the gospel to Satan's captives.

III. Mention some of the circumstances attending this proclamation. And then,

IV. Subjoin the improvement of the subject.

We are,

I. To shew what this proclamation is. This royal proclamation issued out by Jesus Christ, is the gospel, the glad tidings of salvation. The gospel is the proclamation of the King of heaven to poor sinners, in which he proclaims liberty to all the captives of Satan, to whom it comes. The law lays the heavy yoke of the curse upon sinners, the gospel brings the offer of liberty. Here we observe,

1. That it is a jubilee-proclamation. You have the law of jubilee, which was every fiftieth year, when seven times seven were over; Lev. xxv. 10, "And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof; it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man into his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family." It was

proclaimed by sound of trumpet, on the day of atonement, ver. 9, then all the poor slaves got their liberty, whether their masters were willing to part with them or not; and all those who had been obliged to mortgage or sell their lands returned to the possession of them again. And so it was a proclamation which made many a heart glad. Now, the gospel is such a proclamation, and the time of it is the year of jubilee. Jesus came, Isa. lxi. 2, "To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all that mourn;" compare 2 Cor. vi. 2, "Behold, now is the accepted time! behold, now is the day of salvation!" O! good news, sinners, there was a day of atonement on the cross, and now the trumpet of the gospel soundeth, and there is a proclamation, bearing that Satan's captives may now have their liberty, though their master be not willing to part with them; that the mortgaged inheritance of heaven and God's favour, though forfeited, may be possessed; poor criminals and bankrupts may return to them again.

2. It is a conqueror's proclamation to captives. The king of Babylon took the Jews captive, and held them seventy years in captivity; but God raised up Cyrus; Isa. xlv. 1—4, and he overturned the Babylonian empire; the destruction of that kingdom was the deliverance of the Jews, for he proclaimed liberty to them to return to their own land. This also was a type of the gospel-proclamation. Satan warred against mankind, he carried them all captive into his own kingdom; and there was none to deliver out of his hand. But King Jesus had engaged him, routed all his forces, overturned his kingdom, and taken the kingdom to himself; Col. ii. 15, "And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it." 1 John iii. 8, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." And now being settled on his throne, his royal proclamation is issued out, that Satan's captives may again return into the kingdom of God.

We shall now,

II. Explain what liberty is proclaimed in the gospel to Satan's captives.

This is the great subject of the proclamation; and that you may see the riches of this proclamation, *know* that Christ by the gospel proclaims to every poor sinner to whom it comes,

1. Liberty from the power and slavery of Satan; Acts xxvi. 18, "He turns them from the power of Satan unto God." Every one who is willing to quit their old master the devil, may come away without his leave. You are welcome to Jesus the conqueror, and the conquered tyrant shall not have power to keep you. Now,

"the Spirit and the bride say Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely;" Rev. xxii. 17. He is a strong one, but there is a stronger one than he, who will break his yoke from off your necks, make his iron fetters to give way, like ropes which are burnt with fire. And though, as long as you are here, he will be molesting you, yet he shall never, never gain his former power over you, and you shall at length be completely freed from the least molestation by him; "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly;" Rom. xvi. 20. He proclaims,

2. Liberty from the law as a covenant of works; Rom. vi. 14, "You are not under the law, but under grace." Satan's captives are under the law as a covenant of works, and it lays a heavy yoke upon them, namely, perfect obedience, under the pain of the curse: Gal. iii. 10, "For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse, for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." This curse they carried away with them when they went into captivity, and it abides on them always, till they be loosed from it. Now, Christ proclaims liberty from this curse, offers to bring sinners from under the dominion of the law, to be under grace, where there is no more curse; Gal. iii. 13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law." Here they are provided with a righteousness imputed to them, and not set to seek it by their own works! where, in case of sinning, the utmost penalty is fatherly chastisement; Psalm lxxxix. 30—33. Thus he offers to take off the law's yoke, to set you without the reach of its curse, and to lay on his own yoke, which is easy; Matth. xi. 29. Jesus proclaims,

3. Liberty from the dominion and bondage of sin; Rom. vi. 14, "Sin shall not have dominion over you." Satan's captives are all the drudges of sin. It does not only dwell in them, as it does in the best, but it reigns over them, fills their hearts and hands continually with its work, so that they can do nothing else but sin; Psalm xiv. 3, "There is none that doeth good, no not one." It lays its commands on them, which are a law which they cannot dispute, but must obey; it has its several lusts in the heart, which are chains to them as its captives, the handles by which it holds them, and drags them after it. Now, Christ proclaims liberty from this, and his Spirit effects it; Rom. viii. 2, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, makes them free from the law of sin and death." He will break sin's dominion, loose the chains of unmortified lusts, and set the prisoners free; John viii. 32, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." And though sin may dwell for a

season, as an unclean, unwelcome guest, he will at length extirpate it wholly. He proclaims,

4. Liberty from the ruining influence of this present evil world; Gal. i. 4, "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." This world has a ruining influence on Satan's captives. The things of this world work their destruction, the smiles of it are killing; Prov. i. 32, "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them;" their blessings are turned to curses; the frowns of it are ensnaring and destructive. The god of this world mixes every cup with poison. The men of this world are ruining one another; and therefore it is said, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation;" Acts ii. 40. There is a plague in Satan's family, and each member serves to infect another, to convey sin and death to his fellow. But Jesus proclaims liberty from this pest-house; you may be drawn out of it, Jesus will pluck you as a brand out of the fire; why stay in it, while he proclaims liberty to you from it? Jesus proclaims,

5. Liberty from the fear, the terror of death and hell; Heb. ii. 15, "He delivers them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Satan's captives may for a time be secure, fearing nothing; but as soon as their conscience awakens, they will be filled with horror, as perceiving the approach of death and hell towards them; they can have no comfortable view of another life. Christ proclaims liberty from this; if you will come to him, conscience shall be pacified with the sprinkling of his blood, ye shall be set beyond the possibility of perishing; he will be to you an almighty Saviour. He proclaims,

6. Liberty from the sting of death and the evil of afflictions. Though Christ, in his gracious proclamation, does not promise that such as obey his will in it shall never be afflicted; yet he promises that afflictions shall be so far from doing them hurt, that they shall do them good; Rom. viii. 28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose;" that though they die, death shall be to them unstinged; John viii. 51, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." So that they may meet it with that triumphant song; 1 Cor. xv. 55, "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?" It shall not be to them what it is to Satan's captives: the serpent's sting, with which it kills the serpent's seed, shall be taken away ere it comes near them. Jesus proclaims,

7. Liberty from the power of the grave; 1 Cor. xv. 55, quoted above. Ver. 57, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory,

through Jesus Christ our Lord." Satan's captives are laid up in their graves as in prisons; and when they come out of them at the resurrection, death and the power of the grave will be still hanging about them; so that they shall but change one grave for a worse, namely, for the lake of fire. But Christ's ransomed ones, who come away on his proclamation of liberty, though they go to the grave, yet the power of it over them shall be broken, death shall have no more power over them for ever. He proclaims,

8. Liberty from condemnation; Rom. viii. 1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." All Satan's captives are condemned malefactors; John iii. 18, "He that believeth not is condemned already." And the sentence shall be solemnly pronounced against them at the great day; and so they shall be led away "into everlasting burnings, prepared for the devil and his angels;" Matth. xxv. This is terrible; but Christ proclaims liberty from it. So soon as thou embracest the offered liberty, the guilt of eternal wrath shall be done away, thou shalt be beyond the reach of condemnation; your standing on the right hand is secured, and the sentence of solemn absolution shall follow. He proclaims,

9. Liberty of free access to God, with holy boldness; Rom. v. 1, 2, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Now, the captive exiles are banished from the presence of God; they can have no access to him, nor communion with him. But our Lord, by his death, has opened the two-leaved gates of his Father's house, and gives free liberty, by open proclamation, to Satan's captives, leaving their master to come in. They have access by one Spirit to the Father.—Jesus proclaims,

Lastly, Liberty, that is, freedom of spirit in the service of God; 2 Cor. iii. 17, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." The Spirit of Christ is called a free spirit, because he makes free. Satan's captives may yield some obedience to God, but it is burdensome, because they act therein as slaves, from a slavish fear of hell and wrath. But Christ's freemen act from a nobler principle, love; Rom. viii. 15, "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby ye cry, Abba, Father:" 1 John iv. 18, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment; he that feareth is not made perfect in love." We now proceed,

III. To mention some of the circumstances attending this proclamation. Here we observe,

1. That the law on which it is founded was the eternal agreement of the glorious Trinity for man's redemption. The eternal law of love and good-will to poor sinners, by which it was provided, that upon the Son of God's laying down his life a ransom for an elect world, they should be delivered from the captivity of sin and Satan, and be made God's freemen; which the eternal Son engaged to do. Accordingly, in the fulness of time he did it, and thereby purchased their liberty. We observe,

2. That the proclamation was drawn up, and is recorded in the Bible, by the Holy Spirit; Isa. lv. 1, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." And what is the whole Bible but a declaration of this liberty, with promises to those who accept of, and threatenings to those who refuse it. The truth and reality of this declaration is sealed by the blood of Christ; "This," said he, "is the New Testament in my blood." So that there is not the least ground to doubt its truth. We observe,

3. That this proclamation is issued out by our Lord Jesus Christ, with the consent of his Father and the Spirit. The Father has sent him to proclaim liberty to the captives. The Spirit says, Come. A whole Trinity invites Satan's captives to liberty. They have no will that the captive exile should die in the pit; Ezek. xviii. 23, "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God; and not that he should return from his ways, and live?" We observe,

4. That this proclamation is directed to men, to the sons of men; Prov. viii. 4, "Unto you, O men, do I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." Not to fallen angels, they are excluded from the benefit of the purchased liberty. But the captives in the land of the living, these prisoners of hope, to them is the proclamation directed, without exception of great, yea, even the greatest of sinners; Rev. xxii. 17, "Whosoever will, may take of the water of life freely." Isa. i. 18, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Such are invited, though they have often refused their liberty, and though they have gone back into their captivity. We observe,

5. That the first crier of this proclamation was the Son of God in his own person. He made this proclamation first in paradise; Gen. iii. 15, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent." Afterwards he took on him man's nature, then came and proclaimed it; Heb. ii. 3, "The Gospel at the first began to be spoken unto us by the Lord." And he sealed it with his most

precious blood, though there were but few who came away upon the proclamation made by him; "Who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" is the complaint of the prophet Isaiah. We observe,

6. That, being ascended into heaven, he has appointed criers in his name the ministers of the Gospel, to publish this proclamation, and to invite sinners to accept of this liberty; 2 Cor. v. 20, "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God." This is our work, to proclaim it unto you, to make you sensible that liberty is purchased, and offered unto you. We are the voice of the great crier; Christ cries to you by us. We observe,

Lastly, That the place where the proclamation is ordered to be made is in this world; Mark xvi. 15, "Go ye," said Jesus to his disciples, "into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." As for those who are gone into the other world, the proclamation can reach them no more; the prisoners there are without hope. But while you are in this world, the proclamation is to you, and particularly when in those public assembles where the Lord's people are gathered together to hear it; Prov. i. 20, 21, "Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets; she crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates, in the city she uttereth her words." It only remains,

IV. That we make some improvement of the subject. This shall be confined to an use of exhortation.

We would exhort you, O captives of Satan! to comply with the design of this proclamation of liberty; we beseech you, receive not this grace of God in vain. To be more particular, we exhort you,

1. To be convinced of your state of captivity; deceive not yourselves with thoughts of liberty, while you are really serving divers lusts. Till you see your captive state, what hope can there be of good to be obtained by the proclamation of liberty? We exhort you,

2. To be willing to come away and forsake your old master and his service. Ah! may not the time past suffice to have done the will of the flesh? 1 Pet. iv. 3. You have been long under this captivity; had the youngest of you been as long a slave to any man as you have been to Satan, you would have been weary of your situation long ere now. O! strive that your spirits may be raised towards your being free, and walk no more contentedly in your chains of divers lusts. You will say, you are not able to come away; but if you were willing, you would not be allowed to remain in your captive state. We exhort you,

3. To be affected at the heart with the news of the proclamation of liberty. Do not hear it unconcernedly, but hear as those who are nearly concerned in the matter. Take a view of the wretched state you are in, and wonder that there is yet hope. How glad were the Israelites in Egypt and Babylon of the notice they had of their liberty! Thy captivity is a thousand times worse, and thy heart should leap within thee at the voice of the deliverer. We exhort you,

Lastly, To accept of the proclaimed liberty, and come away with the deliverer. Give up with your old master, lay by his work, bid farewell to his kingdom, as never to remain more in it. Shake off your fetters resolutely, and embrace cordially the offered liberty of the sons of God. To prevail with you in doing this, we present you with the following motives :—

Motive 1. Consider that the captivity you are in is a most miserable bondage and slavery; Egyptian, Babylonish, and Turkish slavery and captivity, all in one, are not sufficient to represent it. And this will appear, if you consider,

(1.) That the master is the devil. While thou art in thy natural state, thou art the devil's captive and bond servant, 2 Tim. ii. 26, and that by a threefold title—as taken in war, 2 Pet. ii. 19—as bought by him at a low rate, "ye sold yourselves for nought," Isa. lii. 3, and—as born in his house, Matth. xxiii. 15. Therefore ye are called to forget that house, Psalm xlv. 10, and to come out of his family, and touch not the unclean thing, 2 Cor. vi. 17. How wretched must that bondage be where the devil is master! Sure he is a cruel and merciless master, who will take pleasure in thy miseries. Do we esteem the case of those wretches so horrible, who, by express compact, are become his? and will we yet contentedly continue in bondage to the same master? Consider,

(2.) That the work is sin, called the works of darkness, Rom. xiii. 12. None of his captives are suffered to be idle, he puts a task in their hands, which they must fulfil. One of two things they are always doing while out of Christ; either weaving the spider's web, working that which will not profit at the latter end, more than such a web will be a garment; or, hatching the cockatrice egg, doing mischief and wickedness that will recoil upon you, to your own destruction. This dung-hill work Satan employs his captives in, is most unbecoming the heaven-born soul. Consider,

(3.) That the provision and entertainment is bad and unsatisfying, Isa. lv. 2, "Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" The best of this sort, which the natural man has, is to eat dust with the serpent, to suck the breast of filthy lusts, which, though it may feast

one's corruptions, poisons the soul; or to eat husks with the swine, Luke xv. 16, to feed on the empty things of the world, which can afford no nourishment. Thus, while you ask from him bread, he gives you a stone; while you ask a fish, he gives you a scorpion. Consider,

(4.) That the wages of sin is death: Rom. vi. 23, "For the wages of sin is death." Present death, spiritual, in the separation of their souls from God, for from every natural man God is departed, whether he knows it or not. Death temporal, to come, armed with its sting, and provided with the envenomed arrows of the curse. And death eternal in hell, where they shall be ever dying, but never shall die. O! shall not the consideration of these things move you to accept of liberty, and come away from such a master, such work, such provisions, and such wages?

Motive 2. The liberty proclaimed is most excellent and glorious liberty, Rom. viii. 21; the glorious liberty of the sons of God; which may create the most surpassing joy in the world. The glory and excellency of it will appear, if we consider,

(1.) The purchaser of it is Christ the King of glory. He it is by whom we have the gospel-jubilee proclaimed in the text. He is the victorious Monarch, who has overcome Satan, and gives liberty to his captives. He is our near kinsman, who has redeemed us by payment of a price, a costly price, even his own precious blood. It was the honour of the Jews that they had their liberty by Cyrus; but how much more honourable is it, to have liberty by Christ! And when such an one has purchased for us liberty, will not you accept it? Consider,

(2.) The ransom paid for it; 1 Pet. i. 18, 19, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot." Never was such a ransom paid for the greatest captive king among men, as for us wretched sinners; even the blood of God. He compassionated the case of the poor captives, laid by the robes of his glory, put his neck under the yoke of the law, endured the wrath of God, the sting of death, and the rage of hell, and all to purchase this liberty for us. Consider,

(3.) The party to whom it was paid, to God, even his own Father; Eph. v. 2, "He gave himself an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour." Satan is but the jailor and executioner, into whose hands men fell, being condemned by the Judge, to whom alone the ransom was due. Hence, in respect of Satan, his captives are said to be redeemed without money, Isa. lii. 3. They are to be

set at liberty by main force, being violently wrested out of his hand, Isa. xlix. 25.—Consider,

(4.) The glorious privileges attending this liberty. It is not a naked freedom, which yet would be valuable, but pregnant with many precious privileges. I have told you already, that it is a liberty from the power of Satan, from the law as a covenant, &c. But besides these, many positive blessings and privileges attend it; such as, the freed captives are made free men of the New Jerusalem, they are made citizens of heaven on earth, and are burgesses there; Eph. ii. 19, "They are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." They are incorporated with the society of saints and angels, of whom Christ is the head. They who had their lot before in the kingdom of darkness, have now their lot in these pleasant places.—The freed captives are made children of the family of heaven; 2 Cor. vi. 18, "And I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." So it is the liberty of the sons of God, for God makes all the freed slaves sons of his house; and whatever children may expect from a father, able and willing to do for them, this they may expect from God. The freed captives are all made first-born: Heb. xii. 23, "The general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven." This excellence of dignity and power is put upon them, they are thus highly advanced. As it was with Joseph, he not only got his liberty but was made lord over Egypt, where he had been a slave; so the freed captive is made king: Rev. i. 6, "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father." This is accomplished in them all, Isa. xiv. 2, "They shall rule over their oppressors." They get mastery over their lusts, and shall at last triumph over Satan, Rom. xvi. 20. They shall sit and judge him, 1 Cor. vi. 3. They are made priests also, to offer up sacrifices of praise to God, Rom. xii. 1. O what a change of their work! They are all heirs of God, and receive the double portion. There is not anything which such an one gets, but it is twice as much and good as that which a captive of Satan has. The blessing is the best half; this the captives of Satan want. *Lastly*, When their minority is over, they shall have a perfect liberty, with the affluence of all things, to an entire completing of their happiness, Rom. viii. 21. O the glorious day abiding Christ's freemen! Now they have got the word, Roll away the stone, Lazarus come forth; but then this will be added, Loose him and let him go. The great day will begin their eternal jubilee; when death the last enemy shall be destroyed, then shall soul and body return to the full possession of the mortgaged inheritance, and the perfect freedom from their captivity. Consider,

(5.) The unchangeableness of this liberty. When once a captive is freed by Christ, all the power and policy of hell cannot bring him back again into bondage: John x. 28, "And I will give unto them eternal life: and they shall never perish; neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand." See how Paul boasts of this, Rom. viii. 38, 39. It is true, were there none to preserve this liberty but the believer himself, it might be lost; but it is infallibly guarded against the gates of hell, by the unalterable decree of God, 2 Tim. ii. 19; by his unchangeable love and covenant; by the continual indwelling of the Spirit, and the prevalent intercession of Christ.

Lastly, Consider the eternity of this liberty. Death does not put a close to this liberty, but rather gives a new beginning to it; it shall continue for ever, they shall live for ever and ever in the enjoyment of it.

Thus life and death are set before you, will you accept this liberty or not? May I not say, how shall ye escape, if ye neglect so great salvation?" Heb. ii. 3. Consider,

1. That it is most unreasonable to refuse it, to remain in captivity after the proclamation of liberty is issued. Would men but make their reason judge betwixt Christ and them, there would be no fear of the cause, Josh. xxiv. 15. Who would refuse their liberty, if they might be made free? liberty from such a master and such work &c.; liberty purchased from such a glorious person, by the glorious King, at such a ransom, &c. Consult your reason, your interest, and will you prefer the pleasures of sin for a season, to the eternal rivers of pleasures at God's right hand? Consider,

2. That every refusal makes your captivity the more firm and hopeless. Satan bores the ear of sinners anew to his door-post on every refusal. Hence none so hard to win, as those who have refused many gospel calls. Tyre and Sidon would be much easier wrought upon than Chorazin and Bethsaida, Matth. xi. 21; Ezek. iii. 7; wild Americans, than Scotsmen. For when the gospel does not soften the heart, it is hardened under it. Consider,

3. That by refusing this liberty, you become the murderers of your own souls. Prov. viii. 39, "He that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me, love death." Hear, sinners, how our Lord expostulates with you on this point, Ezek. xviii. 31, 32, "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart, and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God; Wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye." You have the poisonous cup of your sins at your head, will ye drink it? ye say, ye cannot help it, ye must drink it

off; our Lord says, Throw it away, it will be your death if you do not. Come to me, and I will free you from this miserable bondage to Satan and your lusts, so that they shall not have that power over you which they have had. Well, if you will not comply, you are murderers of your own soul with a witness, as really as if ye did wilfully drink up a cup of poison, or stabbed yourselves with a sword. Consider,

4. That if you refuse, you make the deliverer your enemy, and shall not escape, Heb. ii. 3, The deliverer will turn your destroyer, for neglecting his salvation. The Lamb of God will be as a lion to you, for slighting his offers of grace. They who know not God, and who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power, 2 Thess. i. 8, 9. As the sourest vinegar is made of the best wine, so the fiercest wrath arises from slighting the greatest grace, Prov. i. 24—31. Consider,

5. That ye know not how soon ye may be beyond the reach of the proclamation of liberty, Luke xiii. 24, 25. The voice of it is not heard on the other side of death, to which we are fast making way. Do you not see, as in Psalm xc. 9, that "we spend our days as a tale that is told?" A new-year's day, and other days adjoining to it, are very ill chosen for revelling, jollity, and carnal mirth; they suit it nearly as ill as does the pretended day of Christ's birth, commonly called Yule-day. Alas! they will give themselves the loose rein in these things, because they are now a year nearer the grave and eternity than they were; because they are entered on a new year, the end of which it may be they shall never see. If people will make a difference between such days and others, it would be most suitable in these days to take a solemn and serious view of eternity, and to be making preparations for that day, which will put an end to their years. However, let this time put you in mind of death's approach, and refuse not the offer of grace, which you will have no more, when once death has carried you off the stage.* Consider,

Lastly, That your judgment will be more grievous than that of those who never heard the gospel, if you do not come away upon the proclamation; Matth. xi. 22, "But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, at the day of judgment, than for you." Remember double stripes are for him who knew his master's will, and did it not; and the hottest place in hell will be for gospel-despisers. Men may have their lusts and sinful courses cheaper in the dark corner of the earth, than in a land of light.

* It would appear that this discourse was delivered the first day, or at least the first Sabbath, of a new year.

We conclude with the following advices. Labour to get a just esteem of your souls, and a due sense of what concerns another life. The soul is the man, as being the best part of the man, the loss of which nothing can ever counterbalance. Matth. xvi. 26, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" The other life is the life chiefly to be cared for, since that only is the life which will have no end; and a man is happy or unhappy, as his plan for that life is well or ill laid. Be sensible of the real drudgery of sin. It is as real a servitude as ever was in the world, while men serve divers lusts. This is clear from the very light of nature: the consideration of the noble nature of the soul, with the experience of the tyranny of unruly passions, made some heathen moralists to lay it down as a principle, That a wise man is a free man. Wherefore, believe that a holy life is the only true liberty; Psalm cxix. 44, 45, "So shall I keep thy law continually, for ever and ever. And I will walk at liberty; for I seek thy precepts." He, then, who has the mastery over his own corrupt will and inclinations, who walks in the way of God's commandments, is a person the most free and easy. *Lastly*, Come to Christ for his redeeming blood and free spirit. Renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh. Receive and improve Jesus, as made of God unto you, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Amen.

JESUS OPENS THE PRISON DOORS TO THE PRISONERS.

SERMON LIV.

ISAIAH lxi. 1,

And the opening of the prison to them that are bound.

HERE is another benefit which, in the gospel, is brought by Christ to sinners who are in their natural state, namely, a proclamation as to opening the prison to the prisoners. In this there are two things.

1. The misery of a natural state, which is here laid out in its full extent, in three particulars. You have heard that unconverted sinners are Satan's captives; this is a sad case, but it is yet worse; for,

(1.) They are also prisoners. Every captive is not a prisoner, but all natural men, being Satan's captives, are held prisoners, shut up in the prison of their natural state. This is Satan's prison, crammed full of his prisoners of war. But this is not all; for,

(2.) They are prisoners in chains, they are bound in the prison. Satan has his irons on them, as malefactors under sentence of death, that they may not escape. This is still worse than being a prisoner. But worse than all this is here stated; for,

(3.) They are blinded too in their prison. For the word rendered opening, does particularly relate to the opening of the eyes; and therefore the prophet uses it to express the relieving of such prisoners perfectly. This is evident by comparing Luke iv. 18, "And recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them who are bruised." It was a custom much used in the eastern nations, and retained among the Turks to this day, to put out the eyes of some of their prisoners, adding this misery to their imprisonment. So the Philistines did with Samson; Judges xvi. 21; and Nebuchadnezzar with Zedekiah; 2 Kings xxv. 7. This, in a spiritual sense, is the case of all prisoners in their natural state. To sum up all, O unconverted sinner! thou art Satan's captive, a captive in prison, and a prisoner in chains; and withal thine eyes are put out, thou art in darkness, even darkness itself. In the words there is,

2. A suitable remedy, full help proclaimed by Christ in the gospel. God has seen the misery of the prisoners, his Son has paid the ransom for them, and thereupon he is sent to proclaim the opening of the prison doors to them, opening every way to them; for this expression comprehends the affording full remedy to their case; namely, opening their prison,—opening their chains,—and opening their eyes. By his word he offers it, by his Spirit he effects it, in all his elect.—From this subject we propose to your consideration the following Doctrines:—

Doctrine 1. That every unconverted sinner is a bound man in the prison of a natural state, with his eyes put out.

Doctrine II. That by open proclamation in the gospel, Christ offers to the prisoners in a natural state, an opening of their eyes, of their bands, and of their prison-doors.

We begin with

Doctrine I. That every unconverted sinner is a bound man in the prison of a natural state, with his eyes put out.

For illustrating this doctrine, we shall,

I. Speak of the imprisonment in which guilty sinners are.

II. Mention the bands, chains, and fetters wherewith they are bound in the prison of a natural state.

III. Point out the darkness and blindness of the prisoners in their natural state.

I. We are to consider the imprisonment in which unconverted sinners are.

This prison is the natural unconverted state; and thus that word, 1 Pet. iii. 19, "By which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison," is by some understood. However, it is plain that this is meant in our text. Thus Peter said to Simon the sorcerer; Acts viii. 23, "For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." Thus sinners in their natural state are said to be all concluded under sin, and shut up under the law; Gal. iii. 22, 23. Concluded or shut up, that is, declared to be so. Let us consider, then, the natural state as a state of imprisonment. Here we shall answer the three following QUESTIONS:—

1. Whose prisoners are they?

2. What are the causes of this imprisonment? And,

3. In what condition are natural men, as prisoners in this their natural state? We begin with,

QUEST. 1. Whose prisoners are they?

(1.) Unconverted sinners are God's prisoners, as the great Judge and party whom they have offended; Rom. xi. 32, "God hath concluded them all in unbelief." There are two things in a natural state.—The sinfulness of it; they can do nothing but sin. Move they cannot without that circle, more than a prisoner out of his prison.—The misery of it. They are under the curse; Gal. iii. 10. This last, God, as a just Judge, inflicted on mankind for the breach of the covenant of works; and while this lies upon them, there can be no communion betwixt God and them, and consequently nothing but sin in them; and so they are all concluded under sin.

(2.) They are Satan's prisoners. He acts as the jailor, and is therefore said to have the power of death, Heb. ii. 14. Man, having freely yielded to Satan, and become his captive, was delivered up into his hand by the Judge. They are under the power of Satan, Acts xxvi. 18. He keeps the keys of this prison, and watchfully marks his prisoners, that none of them escape. Nay, when the commandment is come, to deliver the elect out of his hand, he will not yield them up, till the prison-doors be broke open, and they are forcibly taken out of his hand.

QUEST. 2. What are the causes of this imprisonment? As to this we observe, that they are in prison,

(1.) As debtors to divine justice. Sin is a debt, and the worst of all debts; committing sin is contracting a debt, which sinners are unable to pay, but it must be paid; a satisfaction must be made to justice to the utmost farthing. As to natural men, their debt is not forgiven. All their accounts stand uncancelled. They have as yet no share in the Cautioner's payment. Therefore they are kept in this prison justly for their debt, and they cannot escape. They

were laid up there for our father Adam's debt. This debt brought all mankind into the prison, Rom. v. 12, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." The covenant being broken, we became liable to pay the penalty, and, being unable to relieve ourselves, were shut up in prison under the wrath and curse of God. They are also arrested there for their own debt, contracted in their own persons. Every sinful thought, word, or action, is a new item in our accounts. And at the instance of every broken commandment, the law arrests the natural man in the prison, clapping its curse upon the sinner; so that the longer one remains in his natural state, there is always the less hope of his delivery. Nay, his delivery is impossible, till the Cautioner loose all the arrests by paying the whole debt.

(2.) They are in prison as malefactors condemned in law; John iii. 18, "He that believeth not is condemned already." There is a sentence of death passed upon all men in a natural state, they are condemned to die eternally; and therefore are committed to the jailor, to keep them in the prison to the day of execution, which they know not how soon it may be appointed, how soon death may lead out the prisoner to have the sentence fully executed upon him. I go on to,

QUEST. 3. In what condition are natural men as prisoners in this their natural state? Their condition is most dismal; for,

(1.) They are under the wrath of God, as the malefactor put in prison is under the wrath of his judge. Hence it is said, Eph. ii. 3, "And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." A natural state is a state of wrath. God bears a legal enmity against thee as long as thou art out of Christ. There is a black cloud of wrath which always hovers over the head of the natural man, and never will scatter till he be a new creature. God is ever angry, never pleased with him; Psalm vii. 11, "God is angry with the wicked every day." His person is not acceptable to God; Psalm v. 5, "The foolish shall not stand in his sight, and he hateth all the workers of iniquity." Nor are his performances acceptable to God, Isa. lxvi. 3. God will have no communion nor fellowship with him; Amos iii. 3, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" There is wrath in his word, his looks, and dispensations towards him.

(2.) They are both under the dominion of the law, and also under the lash of it; Gal. iii. 10, "For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse, for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." It has him as fast in its hands as ever a prisoner was. It

has him by the neck, saying, Pay what thou owest; and will never quit the hold through the ages of eternity, unless he get the Surety that is able to take it off his hand. Its demands are high, quite above his reach; perfect satisfaction for what is past; perfect obedience for what is to come. It is a merciless creditor, and will abate thee nothing. As long as thou art in its power, (and that is as long as thou art in this prison), thou must lay thy account with the payment of the utmost farthing. What though the sentence is not speedily executed? a reprieve is no pardon; Deut. xxxii. 35.

(3.) They are under the power of Satan, as the keeper of the prison, Acts xxvi. 18. He has a commanding and a restraining power over them, 2 Tim. ii. 26, "They are in the snare of the devil, and taken captive by him at his will." They cannot move out without the bounds of his jurisdiction, more than the prisoner out of the dungeon. It is true, Satan keeps not all alike close, some have the liberty of the form of godliness, on account of which they reckon themselves secure as to the goodness of their state, and by this delusion they are held the faster in his hands.

(4.) They are in a most uncomfortable condition. If a person was in a palace as a prison, it would be uncomfortable; far more in this case, the pit wherein is no water has nothing to refresh the soul; Zech. ix. 11. It is true, most natural men are stupid, they consider it not; they are blind, and they see not the shadow of death about them. But when once their eyes are opened, there is no more rest for them there; they cry, "What shall we do to be saved?" They see the filthy prison-garments of unmortified, unpardoned sins about them, which they can no longer wear at ease. The scanty allowance of the prisoner's diet, unblessed mercies, which can serve for nothing but to keep in the wretched life till the day of execution.

(5.) They have no security for a moment's safety; but if their eyes were opened, they would see themselves every moment in hazard of dropping into the pit of hell; see the natural man's case, Psalm vii. 11—16. He is ever standing before God's bent bow, and has nothing to secure him for a moment from the drawing of it. He is condemned already, and the sentence is past; no day known for the execution, uncertain but every day the dead-warrant may be given out against him, and he led forth to execution. What can he see to put it off, but long abused patience which will wear out at length?

(6.) They are so secured, that they can never get away without satisfaction for their debts and crimes. There is no breaking this prison. Sooner may bars of iron and gates of brass be got over,

than a prisoner can get out of the state of wrath without satisfying the demands of the law. And therefore the sinner will die in this prison, if he come not to Christ. There is no getting out of this pit but by the blood of the covenant.

For the improvement of this part of the subject, O! sirs, be concerned to look to the state of sin in this glass, and be ye duly affected with it, as the matter requires. Consider, sinner, where you are, and in what condition. Is the state of sin a prison-state? Then who are the men that walk at liberty? Is it not these whose consciences are purged by faith in Christ, whose guilt is removed, who walk after the Spirit, and lead a holy, heavenly, circumspect life? Or is it those who, scorning to be bound up to the rules of a holy walk, can stretch their consciences at their pleasure, and take to themselves a sinful liberty, which others dare not for their souls, who can laugh at those things for which others mourn, and follow their lusts to the ruin of their souls? Truly no. All that sinful liberty which those do take, and all the pleasures which they have in it, is but the rattling of the chains of the devil's prisoners, while they go up and down in their prison. Is the state of sin a state in which ye can quietly sleep another night? It is a Sodom on which fire and brimstone will come down. Haste ye, and escape for your life. Ah! sinner, canst thou be at ease in a state of wrath? The world, it may be, smiles upon thee; it may be that it frowns; but what of either of these, while God is angry with thee every day? Thou hast perhaps something for many years for thy body, it may be nothing; but what security hast thou for thy soul, when death shall call thee hence, thou knowest not how soon? Is the work of conversion to God a slight business, about which persons are under small necessity to trouble their heads? Surely it is a most weighty business, which, if it be not done, there is nothing at all done for eternity. Let men in an unconverted state put on what appearances of religion they will, perform what duties they will, they are but dead works, wrought in Satan's prison, and leave the worker in a state of death. Turn, turn ye, then, from your sins unto God, cry for regenerating sanctifying grace, rest not till you get it. Will you not eagerly embrace the offer made you in the proclamation of opening the prison to those that are bound? Christ is come to your prison door, offering by his blood and Spirit to set you free. Are you willing to come away? or are you so in love with your prison as not to care for deliverance? We are,

II. To mention the bands, chains, and fetters, with which unconverted sinners are bound in the prison of a natural state. These are twofold, God's and Satan's. There are,

1. God's bands, for they are his prisoners; and these are heavier than the heaviest irons ever were on prisoners; for,

(1.) There are bands of guilt and the curse on them all, by which the law binds them over to wrath, Gal. iii. 10. Guilt is a bond binding over the sinner to deserved punishment. The curse of the law devotes him to destruction. These, worse than iron fetters, enter into the soul; and while they lie on persons, they cannot stir out of the prison, nor make their escape. No sooner is the soul awakened to feel them, than it feels them heavier than can be borne.

(2.) There are the bands of judicial hardness on some. Those with whom the Lord has been long dealing, who will not hear, but harden themselves against calls, warnings, and reproofs; many times the Lord judicially hardens them, makes hardness of heart their punishment, as it is their sin; recalls the motions of his Spirit, Hos. iv. 17, "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone." He gives them over, saying, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still," Rev. xxii. 11; he gives them up to their own lusts, Psalm lxxxi. 12, "So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust; and they walked in their own counsels;" and he gives them up to Satan to harden them, 2 Cor. iv. 4, "He hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." So that under the most softening means they grow worse and worse, harder and harder, Isa. vi. 9, 10. These are fearful bands: but besides these there are,

2. The devil's bands, which he puts on his prisoners in their natural state, to secure them, that they may not come out of it to Christ, may not be converted, may not be turned from their sins unto God. These are many; such as,

(1.) The band of prejudices. These are so fixed on natural men, that Jesus says, Matth. xi. 6, "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." Satan dresses up religion and true holiness in such a monstrous shape, that they are affrighted at it, they cannot wish it, they can never get a heart to it; and therefore they entertain Christ's message, as Nabal did David's, 1 Sam. xxv. 11, Shall we, say they, give up with that pleasant or profitable way, in which we are, and betake ourselves to a way that must needs be a continual weariness? This is a strong band, but when the eyes are opened, and God's ways are tried in earnest, it would break like an untwined thread; Prov. iii. 17, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Come and see. There is,

(2.) The band of ill company. Satan does as the Romans did

with some of their prisoners, he binds his prisoners together, so that one helps to hold fast another, to their ruin; Prov. xiii. 20, "A companion of fools shall be destroyed." Thus there are bundles of drunkards, swearers, Sabbath profaners, despisers of what is good, worldlings, to whom the world is the chief good; and every one of the bundle is a snare to the soul of another. With an eye to this is the terrible sentence given, Matth. xiii. 30, "Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them." Therefore is the gospel-invitation, Prov. ix. 5, 6, "Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled. Forsake the foolish, and live, and go in the way of understanding." There is,

(3.) The band of earthly-mindedness. This held them fast who were bidden to the gospel-supper, Luke xiv. 16—20. The wretched world had its bands on every one of them, so that they could not stir to come. They must look to this and the other business, that they do not lose their advantage; and while the devil's servant is thus busy here and there, looking well to this and that, the immortal soul, with the keeping of which God charges him, is lost. The pleasures of the world, like syren songs, arrest them like iron fetters covered with silk; these secure them. The cares of the world, like a thicket, entangle them, they cannot get leisure for them to mind their souls; and the weary earth ever interposing betwixt them and the Sun of Righteousness, they are thus kept in a dark prison. There is,

4. The band of unbelief. This is such an one as no less than the arm of the Lord can take off; Isa. liii. 1, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Men hear the word, but they do not believe it; they believe not the doctrine of the gospel, they count it foolishness, 1 Cor. i. 23. The promises they do not believe, they count them but fair words, and will not quit their certainty in a sinful course for the hope of them, Heb. iv. 1, 2, 11. The threatenings they consider as mere scarecrows, and in spite of them promise themselves peace; Deut. xxix. 19, "And it shall come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst." They believe not their need of Christ, and therefore they slight and reject him. There is,

5. The band of slothfulness. This ties down the natural man in his prison-bed, saying, Prov. vi. 10, "Yet a little sleep, yet a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep." It hangs so heavy upon his legs, that he cannot move them in the way of God; Prov. xxvi. 13, "The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way." "A

lion is in the streets, yet his feet are swift to evil," Isa. lix. 7. This band is so heavy on his head, that he cannot lift up his eyes; and on his hands, that he cannot lift them to his mouth for his soul's behoof; Prov. xxvi. 15, "The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth." This is a hellish gulph on earth, that swallows up convictions, resolutions, motions of good, and the like. They could be content to be better, if God would work with them as with stocks and stones, which are at no pains for their own polishing. They can spend whole days, and even nights, for the world and for their lusts; but to spend a day, or a considerable part of a day, in clearing their accounts, and laying down their measures for eternity, this is what they cannot be troubled with. There is,

6. The band of delays. This held Felix fast, when the rest of the bands on him were like to give way, Acts xxiv. 25. When trembling under Paul's preaching, he said, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a more convenient season, I will call for thee." The prisoners, many of them, are not resolved not to come out, only they put it off, resolving to do it afterwards. The young put it off till they be old, the old till death come to their bed-side. Some make one resolution, and some another, to turn to the Lord; and though the time comes which they had set, yet they still put it off again to another time; and so on, till death comes at length, and sweeps them off, ere they have power to execute their good purposes. There is,

7. The band of delusion; Isa. xliv. 20, "He feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" They are under a fearful delusion as to their state, like Laodicea, Rev. iii. 17, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." As one is refused admission by mistake, so Christ is often kept at the door; for the poor deluded sinner thinks he is in already. They abide fast in the gall of bitterness, because they imagine themselves to be got out of it already. They remain unconverted, because they reckon themselves already converted. This is a most dangerous case, which should stir us all up to an impartial examination of our state; Isa. l. 11, "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks which you have kindled. This ye shall have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow." There is,

Lastly, The band of divers lusts; 2 Tim. iii. 6, "Laden with sins,

led away with divers lusts." They are laden with them, as ever a prisoner was with irons, so that by them Satan holds them fast. Unmortified lusts crawl up and down, preying on their souls, and keeping them in a state of death. They hang about them, crying, Give, give, so that they can get nothing done to purpose for eternity. And so many unmortified lusts as there are about a man, Satan has so many handles to hold him by. A lust of covetousness, of pride, sensuality, and the like, will hold a man fast.

This part of the subject may be improved in a use of lamentation.

This is a lamentation, and may be for a lamentation over all the unconverted, as bound men in the prison of a natural state. Thou art little concerned with it, but the misery of the case deserves tears of blood. For thou art laid up in custody at the instance of God's law and justice, as a debtor and criminal. As a debtor, thou shalt not be let out till thou hast paid the utmost farthing. But, alas! thou hast nothing wherewith to pay; men and angels cannot help thee; their united stock is not sufficient to pay off the debt of sin. As a criminal, thou canst not be let out, till thou abide thy trial; and terrible will it be whenever God calls thee to it; when thy indictment is read, and thou art tried for thy life according to law, what canst thou say? thy crimes are undeniable. Thou canst not get out by force or fraud, slight or might. Thou art God's prisoner, as the offended party. What canst thou do or say that is not known to him who sees all things? Whither canst thou flee, where his hand will not find thee out. Thou art Satan's prisoner as thy jailor. He has malice enough to prompt him to watch and keep thee, power enough to hold thee still. His iron-bands and chains are upon thee in the prison-house, how canst thou escape? Look to the bands on thee in the prison; look on them and mourn, and lament thy case. There are bands on thee of God's laying on, and who but he then can take them off? for he shutteth, and no man can open, Rev. iii. 7. Thou art bound under the curse of the law, and God has bound thee; to whom canst thou apply to loose thee? If men lay on bands, God can loose the prisoner, whether they will or not; "The Lord looseth the prisoners," Psalm cxlvi. 7. But if God lay on the bands, the whole creation may stand and commiserate the prisoner. They may drop a tear, but neither angels nor men can loose him. There are bands on thee of Satan's laying on; and these must be sad ones which are led on by that hand. He is the strong man; it must be a stronger than he who can loose them; this is beyond thy reach. Thou didst not feel God's bands, but walkest lightly under them. Thou entertainest and takest a pleasure in Satan's chains, in your company, sinful pleasures, and the like. This makes

thy escape the more hopeless; while thou rejoicest in thine iron fetters, as if they were chains of gold, it is an evidence that thou art beside thyself. Finally, These bands will infallibly secure thy ruin, if thou be not loosed in time; thou wilt die in the prison, if thou be not timeously brought out. There is but one step betwixt thee and death, eternal death. If thou die in the prison of an unconverted state, thou wilt go to the prison of hell, where the prisoners are kept without hope of any release.

This being the case, see to yourselves in time, O prisoners of hope! Labour to be loosed from your bands, that you die not in the pit. To such I would offer the following ADVICES:—

1. Awake, and feel the weight of the bands on thee; there is no hope of thy deliverance while thou walkest lightly under them. Mourn over your guilt, your unbelief, and long for deliverance.

2. Put your case in the hand of the great Cautioner, who is willing and able to relieve you. Employ the Advocate, who will certainly carry the plea in your favour. He will not do as the butler who forgot Joseph, though employed to use his interest to bring him out of prison; but by the blood of his covenant Jesus will deliver you.

3. Give in your petition to your Judge: Job ix. 15, "I would," says Job, "make my supplication to my Judge." Pray, pray, ye prayerless persons; pray every day, pray always, ye who pray only now and then; a sign that ye have to begin this exercise, to pray to purpose. Pray seriously, fervently, importunately, ye that are formal in prayer. Your life lies at stake: there is no time to trifle.

4. Hasten your trial, that your plea may be heard before a throne of grace; for if you miss that tribunal, it will come before another at death and judgment, when it will be impossible for you to stand. There are two tribunals for such prisoners, the tribunal of mercy and grace, and the tribunal of justice. There is, the tribunal of mercy and grace, to which the sinner is brought in the work of conversion, in time, in this world. Hither the elect prisoner is brought, and stands trembling, while other prisoners lie still in the prison, jovial and easy. Here he is accused, convicted and condemned; he subscribes to the equity of the sentence; but, by the provision made in this court for criminals, he comes off acquitted from the sentence of death, to return to the prison no more. There is the tribunal of justice, to which the sinner is brought at death and the last day. Here the prisoner, in his natural state, is sisted, accused, convicted, and condemned without remedy; Matth. xxii. 13, "Then said the king to the servants, Bind him (that wants the wedding-garment) hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer dark-

ness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." And from hence he is sent into the prison of hell.. At the one or the other of these tribunals, all the prisoners must appear for their trial. To the first, I would have you to hasten your cause; for it has advantages which the other has not. In the first, the law is subservient to the gospel, and condemns, to make the sinner flee to the Mediator; Gal. iii. 24, "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." In the second, the law condemns, to make the sinner's case absolutely hopeless. The one makes the sinner sick unto life and everlasting health, the other to death. At the one, a person may have the advantage of a Surety to undertake for his debt, of an Advocate to plead for him, 1 John ii. 1, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins." He never fails to bring his client's cause to a comfortable issue. But at the other, there is no Cautioner, no Advocate; the prisoner must act all for himself; yea, the Cautioner and Advocate is judge to condemn him. Finally, at the one, there is a covert of blood for the condemned man to flee under, where the sentence of death cannot take effect. There are horns of an altar, from which justice cannot take him, and a city of refuge, where he shall be safe. But none of these are to be had at the other: therefore haste the trial. We now proceed,

III. To consider the darkness and blindness of the prisoners in a natural state. Here it will be necessary to attend to three things. *First*, The nature of this blindness. *Secondly*, The kinds of it incident to these prisoners. And, *Thirdly*, The effects of it upon them. Let us attend,

First, To the nature of this blindness. And here we may observe, that it is a spiritual, and not a bodily defect. Though they have their eyes in their heads, their poor souls are full of darkness; Eph. v. 8, "Ye were sometimes darkness." Though they may have a natural and literal knowledge of spiritual things, yet they want the spiritual and saving light of life; 1 Cor. ii. 14, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." How manifestly are these distinguished! Though they have the knowledge of the history of these things, yet they are strangers to the mystery of them. Thus it is said, Deut. xxix. 4, "Yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day." Again, it is total blindness. They are not only dark, but darkness itself, Eph. v. 8. There is not the least gleam of saving light in their souls; they are absolute strangers to, and unacquainted with God in Christ. Their

service in religion is to an unknown God. They know not Christ; there is a transcendent glory in him, but they cannot perceive it. They are strangers to themselves; they are wretched and miserable, but know it not, Rev. iii. 17. They see not their sins in their own ugly colours, in their natural deformity. Let us,

Secondly, Attend to the kinds of blindness incident to these prisoners. There is a natural blindness common to all of them. All Adam's children are born blind; Rom. iii. 11, "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." Our minds naturally are void of saving light, we have lost saving knowledge, with other parts of God's image. Hence, whenever grace opens the eyes, people are as it were brought into a new world, seeing things they never saw before, and seeing them in that manner in which they never saw them before. Again, There is an acquired blindness, which they procure to themselves; Eph. iv. 18, "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." The power and prevalence of lusts blind them more and more to the true interest of their souls. The light shines about them, but they hate it; it glances in their faces from the word and providence, but they shut their eyes and will not let it in; Isa. xxvi. 11, "Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see." They by this means strengthen their diseases; and the longer they continue in it, there is the less hope. Finally, There is a judicial blindness; Isa. vi. 9, 10, "And he said, Go and tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes." They rebel against the light, they abuse that light which they have, they will not open their eyes to clear light, and God judicially shuts them. He withdraws the common influence of his Spirit from them, and they are infatuated, so that they cannot see their own true interest, but act as fools and madmen in matters of the greatest importance. They are "delivered over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient," Rom. i. 28. They are also delivered to Satan, who, as the executioner of justice, binds them more and more; 2 Cor. iv. 4, "He blinds the minds of them that believe not." We are to attend,

Thirdly, To the effects of this blindness on the prisoners. These are many; I mention the following:—There is,

1. A situation truly uncomfortable and piteous. They are sitting in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death, Matth. iv. 16. What a melancholy case were the Egyptians in during the

three days' darkness, while the Israelites had light in all their dwellings! It was among the last and worst of their plagues. Surely light is sweet; and the more excellent the light is, it must be the sadder to be deprived of it. The light of God's grace and favour is the most excellent light, and therefore heaven is called light, and hell is darkness, utter darkness; no gleam of comfort in hell. A natural state is the suburbs of hell, and no real comfort in this condition, but a possibility of help. Therefore the saints pity them, as in a most piteous condition. Jerusalem's case drew tears from our Saviour's eyes, Luke xix. 41, 42. There is,

2. Unacquaintedness with their own state of sinfulness and misery; Rev. vii. 17. Their misery; they are blind, they see not the hazard they are in every moment of dropping into the pit. The messengers of death are approaching them, the sword of justice is hanging over their heads, signs of approaching ruin are on them and about them; others see it, but not themselves; Hos. vii. 9, "Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not." The prodigal never saw his starving condition, till he came to himself, Luke xv. 17. Their sinfulness also; of this they are ignorant; Rom. vii. 9, "For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died." As in a house, the motes flying thick there are not perceived till the sun-beams enlighten it; so, till the Lord open the eyes of the blinded sinner, he sees not those swarms of living lusts which are preying on his dead soul, the innumerable evils which compass him about, those multiplied pieces of guilt which are binding him over to destruction.

3. They are easily ensnared and deceived in matters of the greatest concern. Our Lord Jesus pronounces a woe to the world because of offences, Matth. xviii. 7. Because stumbling-blocks laid before the blind cannot but have most pernicious effects. The world is full of snares laid by Satan and his instruments; and the blindness of the mind exposes men to the utmost hazard by them. How easily are they cheated out of their greatest interests for another world, and made to hug a shadow instead of the substance, and embrace a scorpion instead of a fish, and stones instead of bread; because, though they be eagle-eyed in the things of time, they are like bats and owls as to the light of life. Like Esau, for one morsel of meat they sell this birth-right, Heb. xii. 16.

4. They get no good of the light of the gospel, but stumble at noon-day, as in the dark. They receive this grace in vain. The night and day are alike to the blind, winter and spring to the dead tree. And hence men live under the gospel as loosely, profanely,

and carelessly, as if they were living in the dark corners of the earth. The light of the gospel, like a shining sun, has arisen, teaching us, that, "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world," Tit. ii. 12. But instead of going like men to their proper work, they like wild beasts go to their dens, and lie at ease, neither working out their own salvation, nor doing any good to others. The light is set up to them, but their works are works of darkness, and so they hate the light.

5. They are precipitating themselves into the utmost hazard to their souls, without fear; Psalm xxxvi. 1, "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes." How fearlessly do men venture themselves into the forbidden ground, rush in the way of sin on the sword-point of justice; Jer. viii. 6, "I hearkened, and heard, but they spake not aright; no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle." They drink up iniquity as the ox the water, being in that case as blind men drinking up a cup of poison, which they know not to be such. There is,

6. Deep security in the most dangerous condition, as not seeing what is before them. They go on in their courses, as the sinners did before the flood, Matth. xxiv. 38. They are exposed every day to the utmost hazard, yet they are secure. They stand before God's bent bow, as a mark to his arrows, yet they are at ease. Wrath is pursuing them, yet they are not concerned to flee from the wrath to come. They are jovial while about the pit's mouth, and even though they are in hazard every moment of falling into it.

Lastly, To sum up all in a word, this blindness fills the whole man in heart and life with darkness and confusion; Matth. vi. 23, "But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness; if, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" A person can do nothing which is good in this case, he lies open to all evil both of sin and misery. And this darkness, unremoved, will make way for eternal darkness.

Having, as we proceeded, made some practical improvement, in conclusion, we shall only exhort you,

1. To be convinced, of this your natural darkness; believe it from the Lord's word, and believe your hazard from it, though otherwise ye do not see it.

2. See your need of Christ to open your eyes. Pray for the Spirit; say, with the blind man, "Lord, that mine eyes may be opened."

Lastly, From what has been said on the several parts of Christ's commission with respect to natural men, unconverted sinners may get a broad view of their misery. Ye are Satan's captives, yea, prisoners, God's prisoners, the devil's prisoners, prisoners in bands, and blinded prisoners. Be deeply affected with your condition, and be persuaded, as prisoners of hope, to return to your strong-holds, while you have access to them. While it is called to-day, harden not your hearts, but hearken to his voice, proclaiming that he is "anointed to open the prison to them that are bound."

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

SERMON LV.

ISAIAH lxi. 1,

And the opening of the prison to them that are bound.

HAVING attended to the first doctrinal point on this subject, we now go on to

DOCTRINE II. That, by open proclamation in the gospel, Jesus offers to prisoners in a natural state, an opening of their eyes, a loosing of their bands, and a bringing them out of their prisons.

We shall illustrate the different parts of this doctrine, under the following heads:—

I. We shall show, that Christ offers to such an opening of their eyes, the recovery of their spiritual sight, and to bring them from darkness unto light.

II. We shall show how Christ takes off the devil's bands from these prisoners.

III. We shall show, that Christ offers to prisoners in a natural state, an opening of their prisons, and a bringing them out of these.

The improvement of each will be added as we proceed. We are then,

I. To shew, that Christ offers to prisoners in a natural state, an opening of their eyes, the recovery of their spiritual sight, and so to bring them from darkness unto light.

What, do such say, is in this offer? Certain it is that saving illumination is hereby offered to you; Rev. iii. 18, "I counsel thee," says he, "to anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." This is a glorious and most necessary benefit, a thousand times more necessary than light to those who are naturally blind. The

unrenewed world lie in darkness, they will not, they cannot see. There is a long and dark night upon them. Christ offers to bring a morning unto their souls, to make the day-star arise there; yea, the Sun of righteousness to shine there. There is a thick mist about you, so that you cannot see your way, but spend your life in endless wanderings among deep pits. He will, by the spirit of his mouth, dispel it, and make light to arise up, that ye may see clearly about you. Your eyes are clouded and blinded; he will make the scales to fall off from them; and this will give you a threefold sight. There is,

1. A sad and melancholy sight, the saddest ever you saw, which will make the lightest heart among us all heavy; and this is a sight of yourselves in your universal sinfulness and defilement. This pricked Peter's hearers to the heart, Acts ii. 37. It struck Paul with the paleness of death; for "I was alive," said he, "without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died," Rom. vii. 9. Men naturally are strangers to themselves, but when the prisoner's eyes are opened, he gets a broad view of his sinful self. He sees a corrupt nature, from which no good can come; averse to good, and prone to evil; not to be changed, but by a miracle of grace; Rom. viii. 24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He sees a corrupt, desperately wicked heart: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" Jer. xvii. 9. There is an emptiness of all good; a fulness of all evil, the seed and root of all abominations which are done in the world, living lusts of all kinds, like so many vermin in their nest, Mark vii. 21; a continual steam of actual sinning and lusting, arising from hence on the steam of a dunghill. Further, he sees a sinful life and conversation, woven into one continued piece of sin, where the parts sometime thought good will appear even black as hell, like the rest; unclean lips, all over defiled with vanity or vileness; an unclean life, which is unfruitful and unprofitable for God and for themselves; full of sins against the holy law of God, committed against much light and love, as well as checks by word and providence, &c. When the Lord comes to the prisoner, and opens his eyes, he takes him and leads him through his heart and life; then what a sad sight does he get! then will he cry, as in Job, xl. 4, "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth." Then is accomplished these words, "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee; know therefore, and see that it is an evil thing and a bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord of hosts," Jer. ii. 19. There is,

2. A terrible and frightful sight, which will make the stoutest heart to tremble, so that they shall say, as Moses did at the burning mount, "I excedingly fear and quake." And this sight is threefold. There is a sight of an absolute God, in the glory of his holiness and justice, Lev. x. 3. Men's eyes are naturally withheld, so that they see not what a God they have to do with, Psalm l. 21. They think he is altogether such an one as themselves; but says he, "I will reprove thee, and set them (your sins) in order before you." When their eyes are opened, they are cured of their fatal mistake; Hab. i. 13, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." They see him on a throne of justice, angry with the wicked every day; a hater of every sin, a severe avenger of sin from the least to the greatest, with whom no sin is accounted a small thing. There is a fiery stream issuing out of his mouth, to devour his adversaries, as engaged, by his word and nature, to magnify the law and make it honourable. This terrible sight will give the sinner experience of the psalmist's case, Psalm lxxiii. 3, "I remembered God, and was troubled; I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed;" and hence make his heart cry out within him, as in Isa. xxxiii. 14, "Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Again, he gets a sight of the fiery law in its absolute purity, extensiveness, and severity; Rom. vii. 9, "For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." The law, to the blinded sinner, is like a looking glass covered over with dust, in which the man never sees the true shadow of himself. But when the sinner's eyes are opened, the glass is rubbed clean, and shines bright, to his terror and astonishment. Then it discovers the damnable nature of some things he thought good, the heinousness of what he reckoned small faults, and makes all his sins greater than ever he thought them. He sees the threats and curses of the law, no more as scarecrows, or as the shadows of the mountains, but more sure than heaven or earth to have their effect. And then one word o f it will go deeper with him than a thousand used to do. Further, he gets a sight of himself, in his miserable, lost, and undone estate. Like the prodigal, he comes to himself, and sees that he is perishing with hunger. He sees himself to be ruined, to be a self-destroyer; a dead man in law, devoted to destruction by the curse of the law; under sentence of eternal death, pronounced by the Judge of all, and registered in the Bible; bound with the threatenings of the law, as so many cords of death; and withal, utterly unable to extricate himself out of this gulph of sin and misery; Rom. v. 6, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."

3. They get a comforting and heart-reviving sight, the most comfortable they ever saw, which will make the most heavy heart joyful. And this is a sight of Christ in the glory of his mediatory office; Isa. xxxiii. 17, "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty, they shall behold the land that is very far off." They see Jesus standing as a Prophet, discovering those thoughts of love, which were from eternity in the breast of Christ's Father, toward these prisoners. Standing as a priest as he had been slain, at the Father's right hand, making intercession for the prisoner's freedom. And as a King, having the sovereign command of life and death, and having the keys of the prison in his hand, to take out the prisoner when he will. O glorious sight for the prisoners! when their eyes are opened. It is a threefold sight. It is a sight of the transcendant excellency and loveliness of Jesus, Isa. xxxiii. 17, (quoted above.) While the prisoner lay in darkness, he was ready to say to every lover of Christ, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" Cant. v. 9. There was then to him more glory in a vain world, in the lust of the eye and the pride of life, than in Christ. But now that his eyes are opened, he sees a glory in him, which darkens all created excellency, as the rising sun makes the stars to hide their heads. He appears now as the pearl of great price, Matth. xiii. 46. All the perfections of the divine glory shine forth in him; these appear in the face of Christ, as in a glass, of which the prisoner now gets a view. And then none but Christ for him; Psalm lxxiii. 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." Again, he gets a sight of his fulness for, and suitableness to, the case of the prisoner. Like the prodigal, Luke xv. 17, he sees that in his father's house there is bread enough and to spare. He sees then that he needs look to no other quarter for help; that there is an all-sufficient fulness of it in Christ. Does the prisoner consider his vast debts? Christ is a cautioner, a mighty one. Does he consider his crimes? Christ died to satisfy for them. He has power over the jailor, and can bind the strong man, loose and bring out the prisoner. Is he defiled in his prison-garments? Christ has white raiment to put on him, in exchange for these. Are there iron gates in the way? yea, irons on the prisoner's legs? He breaks the bars of iron, and brings out the prisoner. Once more, he gets a sight of the willingness and readiness of Christ to communicate of his fulness; Heb. iv. 15, 16, "For we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find

grace to help in time of need." He now sees the truth and reality of gospel invitations and promises, that they are not only fair words, as he sometime thought them, but sure and tried words; Psalm xii. 6, "The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." This revives the fainting heart, is the great cordial for a soul ready to perish; so that the prisoner resolves to venture himself, and lay his whole weight on the glorious Deliverer.

Before leaving this head, it may be of importance to inquire, what ground the blinded prisoner has to rest upon and embrace this offer in the proclamation of the gospel? As to this we observe,

1. That there is nothing offered but what our Lord can perform and make good; Numb. xxiii. 19, "God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent; hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Jesus is the true light, the light of the world; the star that came out of Jacob, Numb. xxiv. 17; the bright and morning star, which puts an end to the dark night in the soul, Rev. xxii. 16, the sun of righteousness, Mal. iv. 2. He has a fulness of the spirit of light in him, to communicate to dark souls, Rev. iii. 1. We observe,

2. That there is nothing offered but what he has already performed in the experience of thousands, who have been Satan's close prisoners as well as you; Isa. xxxv. 4, 5, 6, "He will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; then the lame man shall leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert." Paul was a blind Pharisee, but O how wonderfully were his eyes opened! There have been many who were as stupid, secure, and blind as any, whom the day-spring from on high hath visited; who sat in darkness, but are now turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God. We observe,

3. There is nothing proposed to us but what he has his Father's commission to offer and make good; Isa. xlix. 6, "And he said, Is it a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth." Ver. 9, "That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth? to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in their ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places." Again, to the same purport, see Isa. xlii. 6, 7. And therefore his coming into the world is compared to the day-spring, Luke i. 78, which comes at its appointed time. We observe,

4. That what is offered is offered unto you. Ye are all comprehended in the proclamation; Isa. lv. 1, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." Whatever be your case, though you be in the innermost room of satan's prison in the world, ye are men, ye are sons of men: Prov. viii. 4, "Unto you, O men! do I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." And the offer is very particular, Eph. v. 14, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." We observe,

5. That there is the greatest reality, truth, and sincerity in the offer; Rev. iii. 14, "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God." Never one embraced this offer who was refused. It grieves his Spirit that sinners do not fall in with it. He wept over Jerusalem for this; and he has lost no bowels of compassion by going to heaven.

This part of the subject we would improve, by urging you to embrace the offered light, the saving illumination proclaimed in the gospel; and to come to Christ with this errand, That your eyes may be opened. And here I would exhort you to the following things:—

Be convinced of your natural darkness and blindness in the things of God. Say not, with the Pharisees, Are we blind also? The less thou seest of this darkness about thee, the greater is the darkness upon thee. The best see but in part, and most men see none at all in a saving manner. Love darkness; John iii. 19, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." As the owl loves not the shining sun, so men wedded to their lusts hate the light, and love to be in darkness. They do not know God, nor his law, nor his Son, nor themselves, and they care not for the knowledge of them; Job xxi. 14, "Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." They are at little pains with their Bibles, and far less with their hearts and lives, to make them agreeable to the light of the word. Do not resist and rebel against the light, Job xxiv. 13, "They are of those who rebel against the light; they know not the way thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof." Let not your lusts carry you over the belly of what light you have, lest ye be judicially blinded. What light God offers you by his word, by providences, or by inward motions and convictions within your breasts, beware of fighting against it, beware of resisting and putting it out. Sometimes the Spirit of the Lord begins to throw in beams of light into the soul, at a sermon, under a rod, or some rebuke of providence. But the sinner cannot be easy till this be again darkened. Be satisfied with no light, which has not a sanctifying and a purifying heat with it. The true light is called the light of

life, John viii. 12. When the Spirit of the Lord fell on the disciples, Acts ii., there appeared tongues of fire, enlightening and warming. Dangerous is the case of men who keep truth a prisoner; Rom. i. 18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." *Lastly*, Go to the Lord for the Spirit of illumination. Pray, search for the same as for hid treasures, and believe for it in the Lord Jesus. Look to him that ye may be enlightened with this saving illumination of his word and Spirit. To prevail with you in all these points, I would mention the following MOTIVES:—

MOT. 1. This illumination is absolutely necessary for salvation. A sinner will never prize Christ, nor come to him, till his eyes are opened to see his sin and misery, what a just God and a strict law he has to deal with, what a precious and suitable Saviour Christ is; John iv. 10, "Jesus answered, and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." While Satan keeps his prisoner bound, he will hold him fast. That which the eye sees not, the heart receives not. The danger may be very great, but when unknown the sinner is secure.

MOT. 2. Blindness under the gospel is most inexcuseable; John ix. 41, "Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say we see; therefore your sin remaineth." It is wilful blindness. Those who live in the dark corners of the earth, where the light of the gopel is not known, what wonder is it that they walk on in darkness? But the light of the gospel shines about us. Christ offers to enlighten us by his Spirit, Eph. v. 14. If we choose darkness rather than light, we must lay our account with our choice being our ruin, John iii. 19.

MOT. 3. Saving illumination is the only way to true comfort, and the want of it the way to utter misery; Col. i. 12, 13, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." At the binding of the soul, Satan completes the security of the prisoner; and at the enlightening of him, Christ begins his deliverance. In them who are saved, the light is carried on to the light of glory. In them who are lost, the darkness is continued, till they come to endless and utter darkness. We are now,

II. To shew, that Christ offers to the prisoners a loosing of those bands wherewith they are bound.

Here it will be necessary to shew,—1. How he looses God's bands from off the prisoners. And, 2. How he takes off the devil's bands from them. Let us then,

1. Shew how he looses God's bands from off the prisoners. The unconverted sinner is God's prisoner under the bands of guilt, and of the curse of the law, which bind him over to destruction. These he looses and takes off the sinner by the application of his own blood; Zech. ix. 11, "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water."

Here we observe,

(1.) That Jesus purchased their freedom from these bands by his death and sufferings. Guilt is a strong tie, the curse is a heavy chain on the prisoner; in these the power of spiritual death lay. But Jesus, by his death, procured the sinner's relaxation; Gal. iii. 13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us." His compassion for the prisoners made him pay for them a ransom of his own blood. He took their bands of guilt and the curse upon himself, that he might loose them from off them. Now he has ransomed the prisoners, who will accept of his delivery, and has a right to loose them from their bands; justice and the law having nothing to object. We observe,

(2.) That Jesus comes in the gospel to the prison door, proclaims and makes offer of liberty to the prisoners. This he does in the text. In his name the offer is made by his messengers; his authority to loose the prisoners is asserted, Matth. xxviii. 18, "Jesus came and said unto them, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." His ability and willingness to do it is confirmed, Heb. vii. 25, "Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." They are pressed to consent to the offer; charged upon their peril to comply with it; and all this to make them willing to come away out of the prison with the deliverer. We observe,

(3.) That though the most part give a deaf ear to the gospel-call, will not believe their danger, but sit at ease in their fetters, yet some are made a willing people in a day of power; Psalm cx. 3. By the word, faith is wrought in their hearts; Rom. x. 17; even that faith whereby the soul lays hold upon, and unites with Christ, flees in under the covert of his blood, lays over the weight of all its guilt upon Jesus, believing his blood to be sufficient to take it all away, and, renouncing all other pleas, betakes itself to this; Rom. iii. 25, "Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." Thus this blood is applied. We observe,

(4.) That when this blood is thus applied, the chains are ordered to be taken off the prisoner; Job xxxiii. 24, "Deliver him from

going down to the pit, I have found a ransom." Yea, the chains fall off of course, since, as in Rom. viii. 1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." The Cautioner's payment is pled for the debtor, and he is discharged; the criminal's cause is carried by the Surety and Advocate, and he is absolved. He is under the covert of blood, therefore neither law nor justice can reach him. He is brought into the bond of the covenant of grace, and so the guilt of eternal wrath, which is the bond of the first covenant, can hold him no longer; guilt and the curse being removed, judicial hardness has no place.

2. Let us shew how Christ looses and takes off the devil's bands from the prisoners. The unconverted sinner is also the devil's prisoner; he likewise lays bands on the sinner. These are in themselves sinful lusts and practices, &c. by which he holds them as by bands. Christ looses from these by the powerful workings of his Spirit, giving them grace, which breaks their bands asunder. He gives them,

(1.) Awakening grace, which rouses them up, and bursts the bands of sloth, wherewith they were held, Eph. v. 14, (quoted above), and cures them of the fatal delusion which they were under as to their state. Like the prodigal, they come to themselves, Luke xv. 17. The sinner sleeps securely in his sins and in his chains; but the Spirit of God gives him a sound awakening, so that his rest in sin is disturbed, and he can no longer get lived at ease in his former courses. His conscience sets upon him, and sounds a terrible alarm of wrath in his ears, which ceaseth not till he has fled to Christ for refuge, and he flees without delay. Jesus gives them,

(2.) Enlightening grace, Eph. v. 14, by which the sinner gets a discovery of himself, and a discovery of God and Christ. He is brought, as it were, into a new world, in which every thing appears in other colours than it did before. The mask which Satan put upon the ways of God and the ways of sin, is pulled off, and he sees the beauty, and the excellence of religion. Thus the band of prejudice is broken, the evil and danger of the ways of sin are exposed to them, so that the sinful company he before delighted in becomes a terror to him, and he says, "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity, for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping," Psalm vi. 8. He sees the vanity and emptiness of all time's things, so that Satan can hold him no longer by this pitiful handle. Jesus gives them,

(3.) Quickening and regenerating grace, by which they receive a new principle of spiritual life; 2 Pet. i. 4, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye

might be made partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." So that the bands of death in which they were held give way, and they become new creatures; 2 Cor. v. 17, "Therefore, if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." They are endowed with a new nature, having new motions and inclinations heaven-ward; so that the band of earthly-mindedness is broken; their will is renewed; Christ becomes their choice above all, and they lay hold upon him with heart and good will, so as that the bands of unbelief give way; their hearts are softened; they get the heart of stone removed, and a heart of flesh given unto them; their affections are changed, so that they now love the things which they before hated, and now hate those lusts and sinful courses which they formerly loved. Jesus gives them,

(4.) Sanctifying grace, by which the power of sin is more and more weakened in them, and the divers lusts with which they were held are mortified, so that lusts cannot command them as they were wont to do. Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace. The new principle stirs in them to the practice of holiness in all manner of life and conversation. Thus Christ, entering into the soul, strikes off the devil's bands, and sets the sinner at liberty.

As an improvement of this part of our subject, it may just be observed,

That this lets us see that none are so fast bound under guilt, or the power of sin and Satan, but they may be loosed. And therefore we have ground of hope in the most hopeless case. A sight of guilt is ready to make the awakened sinner despond; but the blood of Christ is sufficient to remove it, whatever it be; "This blood cleanseth from all sin," 1 John i. 7. Though the cords of guilt be manifold, which cannot be loosed from off the conscience by floods of tears, the most bitter mournings; yea, though above the power of men and angels; yet the blood of Christ is of infinite value and efficacy; Isa. i. 18, "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." In like manner as to the power of sin. The awakened sinner shall see that it is as easy for the leopard to change his spots, and the Ethiopian his colour, as for him to change his heart, or free himself from the power of sin. He will see that it is hard to get out from under the power of Satan and his own lusts. But remember, Christ is the stronger man, he can bind Satan and spoil him of his goods. There is no-

thing too hard for him to do. Grace is powerful, and will always be victorious where it once begins; it converted Paul from a persecutor into a preacher; Manasseh, who was like a lion, was changed into a lamb. Therefore look to him that ye may be loosed.

We proceed now, with the

III. General head, to shew that Christ offers to the prisoners, in a natural state, an opening of their prisons, and to bring them out.

Here I shall shew what is in this offer, 1. More generally; and then, 2. More particularly.

1. More generally, it is the bringing the sinner into a state of grace. There are two things in it. The Lord Jesus opening the sinner's prison brings him,

(1.) Out of the state of condemnation, in which he lay from his birth till that happy hour; Rom. viii. 1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." The sentence of the law condemning him to eternal death is annulled, is taken off, and can affect him no more. He is made a free man, delivered from the curse by him who was made a curse. He is brought out from under the law as a covenant of works: Rom. vi. 14, "Ye are not under the law, but under grace." Though it continues to be a rule to him, yet he is neither left to seek life by his obedience to it, nor can he any more be doomed by it to eternal death for his disobedience; the law being dead to him, and he to it, in this respect. Jesus brings him,

(2.) Out of that state of sin in which he lay all his days before, incapable of doing any thing truly good, capable of nothing but sinning. But now the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made him free from the law of sin and death, Rom. viii. 2. The prisoner in his natural state, with the rest of the world, lieth in wickedness, 1 John v. 19; like a dead man in his grave, rotting and consuming. Christ quickens the sinners, opens their graves, and brings them out from under the reigning power of sin. In the day of conversion, Christ comes to the prison door as to the grave of Lazarus, and says, as he did to him, Come forth. So the dead man lives, the prisoner comes out of the dungeon, out of a state of sin into a state of grace.

2. Let us consider what is in this offer more particularly. There are several great benefits which it proposes to us; such as,

(1.) The prisoner's debts are discharged, even to the last farthing; Col. ii. 13, "And you being dead in your sins, and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses." They were God's prisoners, and could

never come out without payment of that debt for which they were imprisoned But the Deliverer takes all the debt on himself; he says to his father, as in Philem. 18, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account." And so it is accounted as if they had paid it.

(2.) The prisoner's crimes are forgiven, which otherwise would have taken away his life; Isa. xxxiii. 24, "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." The prisoner's pardon is written in the blood of his Redeemer, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." Heb. viii. 12, "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." The King's seal is appended to it, so that neither law nor justice can quarrel it; Eph. i. 13, "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." This is the white stone given to him that overcometh, of which none knows the sweetness but those who have it.

(3.) The prisoner is delivered from the power of Satan, Acts xxvi. 18, they are turned from the power of Satan unto God." The jailor has no more power to keep the prisoner, nay, nor ever to bring him back; because he is not delivered by fraud, but in a legal way, by the sovereign authority of the King's Son, who has all power in heaven and earth. The demands which law and justice had on the prisoner have all been satisfied by the deliverer, therefore he can be no longer held. As to the prisoner,

(4.) His prison-garments are taken away, and he is clothed with change of raiment. The rags of his own righteousness are thrown away, and he is clothed with the fair white raiment of Christ's righteousness put on by the hand of faith, "I counsel thee," says Jesus, as in Rev. iii. 18, "to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear." The old man with his deeds is put off, the body of sin is destroyed, and the new man is put on. The prisoner stands before his deliverer, like Joshua before the angel; Zech. iii. 3, 4, "Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel; and he answered and spake to them that stood before him, Take away the filthy garments from him; and unto him he said, Behold I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment."

(5.) The prisoner is brought forth into the light of God's countenance, Isa. xlix. 9, "That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, shew yourselves. They shall

feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places." God is in Christ reconciled to him. He is no more his enemy, but the sinner's friend, his confederate in the covenant of peace. The peace is made up through the great Peace-maker, Rom. v. 1, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Though the world henceforth may hate him, and become his enemy, he has friendship with heaven, which may support him under all their hatred.

(6.) The prisoner is restored to all his forfeited privileges; Eph. ii. 17, "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." As Joseph, being a slave, was brought out of the dungeon to Pharaoh's court, and made the ruler over Egypt; so in that day in which the soul is brought to the state of grace, he is freed from his slavery, brought out of prison, and advanced in the court of heaven. Like the poor and wise child out of prison, he comes to reign, as in Eccles. iv. 13, 14, for they are all made kings who are delivered by Christ. We shall shut up this subject with a practical improvement of the whole.—And this,

1. In an use of instruction.

This subject affords some lessons to us all; as,

(1.) To be living in a state of sin is the most miserable life in the world, the most miserable life out of hell. Why are all those similitudes used, of a captivity, an imprisonment, and this of the worst kind, but because no captivity, no imprisonment is sufficient to express the misery of this captivity? Therefore these similitudes are multiplied, that what is wanting in one may be made up by another. And whenever the sinner's eyes are opened to see his misery, he will see that the worst case of captives and prisoners on earth comes infinitely short of the miserable state he is in, so soon as eternity succeeds time. For,

(1.) Of all persons in the world, an unconverted person has the least ground to be joyful: John iii. 36, "And he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." Some think they are young and in their bloom, and therefore they may be allowed a pleasant jovial life. Some think like him who said to his soul, "Soul, thou hast goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Every one who is not held down with worldly cares or crosses, is ready to take his ease, though a stranger to Christ and a state of grace. But I would say to thee as Jehu did to Joram, 2 Kings ix. 18, "What hast thou to do with peace?" Let them live joyfully, whose prison doors have been opened; they are set free, to whom God is a friend, and who are beyond

the hazard of eternal condemnation. But what reason have you to live joyfully, who are captives, prisoners, condemned criminals, and know not but this day you may be led out to the execution? If there were a drawn sword hanging over your heads wherever you went, would it not mar your mirth and jollity? The sword of God's justice is thus suspended over all those who are out of Christ.

(2.) It would be impossible for one to live at ease in an unconverted state, if they were not blind to their own hazard and misery; Luke xix. 41—43. Ye may as well bid a malefactor be easy under the sentence of death, and the sight of the gibbet, or a man hanging over a deep gulf by a slender twig, as to bid an awakened sinner be easy in his case, before he get out of it. But many are posting to destruction down the hill, and yet are very easy, because they see not the frightful case they are in. And why do they not see it, but because they shut their eyes? It is told them, but they will not believe it; so after all they are as easy as if they had been hearing an idle tale. We are instructed,

(2.) That the delivery of the sinner out of the state of nature into a state of grace, from under the guilt and reigning power of sin, is no easy business, but business of the greatest weight and difficulty, which ever the world was witness to. Consider the ransom which had to be paid for the captives and prisoners; the greatest ransom ever given by men is not once to be named with it. Silver and gold crowns and kingdoms, would not do here, but blood, even the precious blood of Christ, 1 Pet. i. 18, 19; angels nor men could not furnish it. Consider the power by which the deliverance is to be effected, no less than an infinite power can do it. What is the storming of towns, the breaking down of iron gates, and the recovering the prey from a lion, to the recovering a sinner from the power of the devil? No less than an omnipotent power can do this, Isa. xlix. 24, 25. For,

(1.) What way can men think ever to be delivered in that careless thoughtless way with which most part satisfy themselves? Luke xiii. 24, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Will drowsy wishes and sluggish desires, unaccompanied with suitable endeavours, do it? Will the leading of a careless life, and then begging mercy from God when they come to die, be sufficient? Will these things serve instead of the work of grace, to pluck the prey out of Satan's mouth, to knock the devil's chains off the prisoners, and set them free? By no means.

(2.) With what face can sinners delay the work of conversion to God? Is it not work hard enough to get out of Satan's grips, be-

gin as soon as we will? Will men venture to stay till he has loaded them with heavier chains, till stronger fetters of guilt be wreathed about their necks? Up, and be doing, lose no time, you will find the work already hard enough. To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. We are instructed,

(3.) That there is no deliverance out of the state of sin and wrath but through Jesus Christ, Acts iv. 12, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." Had there been another name, another person, Jesus had not been employed in this work. There was none but he who could do it; and we may add, that the worst of sinners may be delivered in and by him. There is no guilt above the efficacy of his blood, no power of sin above the efficacy of his Spirit. At the same time, without him the most blameless person who lives will be ruined for ever; John xiv. 6, "I am the way," said Jesus, "no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Death will prey upon them in time, though insensibly, and devour them for ever, to their everlasting misery. This subject instructs us,

Lastly, That none are delivered by Christ, but those who are made willing to come away with the deliverer out of their sins, and who, with the most solemn seriousness, embrace the covenant. He does not say that he will break open the prison-doors, and bring away the prisoners, sleeping or waking, willing or unwilling, careless or careful to be away. No; he deals with them in a rational way, proclaims the liberty; if they accept of it as he offers it, well and good; if they will not have it but on terms of their own making, they must remain in prison, and perish; John v. 40, "And ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." Then,

(1.) If any be careless as to their getting out of this state, Satan is in no danger of losing them. Though the liberty be proclaimed, they trouble not themselves about the matter, further than to hear it. Satan keeps his prisoners, and Christ will never bring them away who are not made desirous to come. Having the offer of liberty, Jesus will leave the soul still in bonds, if there be not a compliance with it.

(2.) It concerns all who would be saved, deliberately to consider the gospel-offer and their own case, and make the most solemn, serious work of closing with Christ, of entering into the covenant, and transacting with the Deliverer, as upon a matter of the utmost importance. Here eternity lies at stake; if they manage it to purpose, they are happy for ever; if they mismanage it, they are undone. If the prisoner manages his business right with this Deliverer, he will be got out of prison; if he altogether miss this opportunity, he must lie still there for ever.

This subject instructs particularly those who are under bonds of which they would fain be rid, what course they are to take.

1. Those who have sometimes walked at liberty, having had their souls brought out of prison by the Redeemer's blood and Spirit; but seem to themselves now to be carried back into Satan's prison again, and feel his chains heavy upon them. The Lord sometimes suffers his own people to fall into this case, because of their careless walking, their grieving and vexing his Holy Spirit, whereby the Spirit is quenched, corruption is strengthened, and Satan gets advantage; Isa. lvii. 17, "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him; I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart." What should they do in this case, but own the justice of the stroke, apply themselves to the Deliverer, who alone can loose spiritual bonds? This is the design of the dispensation; Hos. v. 15, "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face; in their affliction they will seek me early." Make new application of this blood by faith, and breathe after the communications of his Holy Spirit; Isa. lvii. 18, "I have seen his ways, and will heal him; I will lead him also, and restore comforts to him and his mourners." He delivered them out of a miserable state, and will also deliver them out of their present uncomfortable condition.

2. Those who feel the bands of guilt strong upon their souls, and are ready to despond under them as bands which can never be loosed. Such should consider, that there is no exception of bands from which Christ is sent to loose; be they weak, be they strong bands, with which the sinner is bound, Christ proclaims liberty from them; and it is an intolerable affront to the Mediator's dignity, to entertain a thought of bands from which the infinite merit of his blood, and the all-powerful efficacy of his Spirit, cannot loose. The dead corpse cast into the prophet's grave was restored to life; and shall not the soul bound with the strongest fetters of death, be set free so soon as quickening virtue comes from a crucified Christ. Such, then, should labour to believe, that they may thus see the glory of God.

3. Those who feel the bands of raging and unruly lusts so strengthened by Satan and their own corruptions, that they are ready to think that there is no breaking of them. Such should consider, that our Lord often singles out those in the most hopeless condition, to make them monuments of his rich grace. Such was the case of the Corinthians, 1. Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11. In the text, those who are blinded in the prison have opening proclaimed to them. Though the heart may be agitated like a raging sea with temptations and corruptions, it will cost Jesus but a word to still them all in a mo-